



Solidarity with Animals

GTI Forum

February 2023



The Forum reflects on humanity's rapacious disregard for and commodification of our fellow creatures. Eileen Crist's opening essay illuminates the historical, philosophical, and political dimensions, arguing that nurturing solidarity with (other) animals stands as a key moral and strategic imperative for a Great Transition. Panel 1 elaborates her conceptual framework, and Panel 2 propounds actions for transformative change.

Copyright © 2023 by the Great Transition Initiative

A project of the [Tellus institute](#), the [Great Transition Initiative](#) is an international collaboration for charting pathways to a planetary civilization rooted in solidarity, sustainability, and human well-being.

Under our Creative Commons BY-NC-ND copyright, you may freely republish our content, without alteration, for non-commercial purposes as long as you include an explicit attribution to the Great Transition Initiative and a link to the GTI homepage.



As an initiative for collectively understanding and shaping the global future, GTI welcomes diverse ideas. Thus, the opinions expressed in our publications do not necessarily reflect the views of GTI or the Tellus Institute.

Contributions

Opening Essay

Solidarity with Animals by Eileen Crist	1
--	---

Panel 1: Perspectives

Lessons from Evolutionary Biology by David Barash	12
Enlarging the Ethical Imperative by J. Baird Callicott	15
Unlearning Human Exceptionalism by Melanie Challenger	20
Steps to a Moral Revolution by Alexander Lautensach	24
Hearing the Voiceless by Judith Lipton	29
Expanding the Sustainability Agenda by William S. Lynn	33
Anchoring the Ought in the Is by Freya Mathews	37
From Solidarity to Policy by Jerry Mitchell	41
Fostering Kinship by Gary Steiner	45
Greenwashing Greens by Angus Taylor	49

Panel 2: Action

You've Got to Be Carefully Taught by Nandita Bajaj	53
Stopping the Bulldozers by Guy Dauncey	57
Beware Utopian Trips by Richard Falk	62
How to Act Locally by Gwendolyn Hallsmith	66
Back to the Farm Mindfully by Mike Jones	69
Taking Ethics to the Decision-Makers by Fred Koontz	74
Toward Movement Synergy by Dayton Martindale	79
Entangled Liberation Struggles by David Nibert	83
Listening to the Forest by Suprabha Seshan	86

Author's Response

Response to Comments by Eileen Crist	91
---	----



Solidarity with Animals

Eileen Crist

Violence and Love

The animal economy, wherein animals routinely suffer truncated and brutalized lives, weaves massively through the global economy. Billions of animals are utilized each year, with virtually no compunction, in industries of food, feed, supplements, clothing, furnishings, textiles, footwear, accessories, luxury products, entertainment, traditional medicine, and pharmaceuticals.¹

The normalization of mass killing, exploitation, and displacement of animals exhibits the ingrained assumption that animals are legitimately subject to absolute human power and that humanity is entitled to repurpose natural habitats without consideration of their being animal homes. Indeed, the animal economy is pervaded by *structural violence*, meaning institutionalized and established forms of violence disavowed as being violent or kept hidden from view. In our time, violence against animals is opposed by increasing numbers of people from all walks of life. Yet the balance of power continues to favor a Conventional Worlds scenario within which the domination of nature is regarded as human prerogative—whether God-given, biologically endowed, or just taken for granted.²

Structural violence against animals has intensified in the “[Anthropocene](#),” with a growing global economy motivated by profit, designed with shortcuts for efficiency, ever expanding its commodity chains, and serving a rising modernized population. The growing global economy also possesses a technological arsenal with colossal power to slaughter, exterminate, and experiment on animals; manufacture and transport animal-based products; appropriate wildlife habitats; and fish out the ocean.

The odd flip side of this violent state of affairs is that love for animals is a tangible dimension of human life. To be sure, this sentiment varies among people and is often qualified in different ways.³ Yet it remains true as a general statement: We recognize it in the rise of nature conservation and ecotourism, the popularity of animal shows and documentaries, the lavish lives of companion species, burgeoning animal shelters and sanctuaries, as well as storytelling and picture sharing on social media. We can even recognize love for animals in their commodification in lucrative industries (e.g., stuffed toys) and in marketing (e.g., the Exxon tiger), which lean into the human soft spot for the animal kingdom.

Affection for animals is sometimes tagged as a privilege of modern lifestyles. This view overlooks the ways that animals have been exalted from time immemorial, in arenas of work, companionship, art, literature, music, mythology, ceremony, and spirituality.⁴ The parable of the good shepherd, as an example, whose ninety-nine sheep returned safely but who nonetheless went searching for the missing one, is emblematic. It is not a story about “efficiency and economy” or “feeding the world.” It is a story about love: the heart connection of the good shepherd with each one of her sheep.

The heartfelt affinity for animals stands in tension with the violence inflicted upon them. Jürgen Habermas’s framework of the societal spheres of *system* versus *lifeworld* sheds light on this contradiction.⁵ Structural violence against animals overwhelmingly adheres to systems (economic, political, and legal), while love for animals resides in uncountable expressions within lifeworlds. Of course, system and lifeworld are far from hermetically sealed, yet they encompass differentiated spheres of human experience. The lifeworld pertains to shared sensibilities and norms of care in everyday life, while systems are governed by power relations and special interests.

The concurrence of violence against animals and affection for them articulates a contradiction. Societal contradiction fosters conflict and instability that eventually precipitate transformation(s). Indeed, the stark incongruity at the core of human-animal relations is the game-changing lever of animal justice activism. Here, I interrogate the conundrum of violence and love with questions of moral purpose: Which of these realities best reflects who we are and aspire to be? And what is the interplay between animal solidarity, human well-being, and a Great Transition to an ecologically vibrant and just future?

The Heritage of the “Differential Imperative”

To unravel the contradiction in our relations with animals, we can start by dissecting the assumption undergirding structural violence: that humans legitimately possess the prerogative of life and death over animals and that humanity is the entitled owner of all geographical space. Through these direct and indirect incursions, the domination of animals is virtually total.

John Rodman coined the term *Differential Imperative* to illuminate the sociohistorical groundwork of animal domination, summarized in the all-too-familiar, loaded question: “How are humans Different from animals?”⁶ This tenaciously rehearsed question in the Western canon (and beyond) sought to expound the qualities that ostensibly distinguish humans from beasts. The gist of the socially constructed human-animal divide became roughly this: to the human realm belong reason, language, and all things cultural; to the animal realm belong instinct, corporeality, and all things biological. While this iron curtain is falling, it long defined the creed of an unbridgeable divide.

Reruns of the Differential Imperative (from Aristotle to Heidegger) contributed to the crystallization of the categories “human” and “animal” as hierarchically ordered domains.⁷ The success of this framing solidified a foundation not only for the subjugation of animals but also for inequality and oppression among humans. Certain groups—women, children, slaves, Blacks, “savages”—were conveniently positioned *below* the supreme (typically white, male, educated) human and above the animals.⁸ The subjugation of animals has thus arguably served as the foundation for the entire edifice of social stratification.

The social construction of *human distinction* carved out a lofty purview, brazenly authorizing humans to dominate animals. Rendering animals as deficient by comparison, the distinguished human could “bask in the reflection of a negatively constituted other.”⁹ The human-animal divide removed (or attenuated) moral consideration for animal well-being and suffering; divested animals of inherent value and dignity; made animals facilely killable; and preempted stigma from attaching to human dignity for violent behavior against animals.¹⁰

Hierarchy between humans and animals remains embedded within the animal economy and Conventional Worlds scenarios, where animals (dead, live, and enslaved) are treated as property, breeding machines, commodities, experimental tools, spectacles, and expendable others. The human-animal divide has been aptly described as “a condition of modernity as a form of order and indispensable to its continued coherence and authority.”¹¹ Yet without the ideological authorization of the Differential Imperative, the proverbial emperor is naked: The domination of animals is exposed as an exercise of sheer force upon animal bodies and animal habitats premised on the fiat of human distinction.

Challenging the Differential Imperative

In history’s course, various thinkers pushed back against the Differential Imperative. Our time, however, is unprecedented in strength of opposition to the human-animal hierarchy: pro-animal discourses and activism seek to free animals and restore them to their natural environments, lives, and destinies. In the quest for animal liberation, two approaches are prevalent.¹²

The first, drawing especially on contemporary science, refutes the Differential Imperative by presenting innumerable physiological, behavioral, cognitive, and experiential similarities between humans and animals. Cognitive ethological studies are a powerful ally in this approach, revealing (in scientific register) that subjectivity, agency, intentionality, culture, and individuality are ubiquitous in animal worlds, and that we are deeply bound with animals in shared sentience and evolutionary descent.¹³

The second approach challenges our received understanding of *difference* itself: it reconfigures difference, now with lower case “d,” as a nonfinite spread of body plans, sensory modalities, forms of awareness, and ways of life among all animals, humans included. This deconstruction divests the Differential Imperative of authority to structure hierarchy and legitimize domination. The hunt for an unbridgeable gap between “human” and “animal” is unmasked as empirically unjustified—a move serving *power over*.¹⁴

The deconstructive approach also highlights how the human-animal hierarchy is transmitted to the social collective through language.¹⁵ The category “animal” gathers innumerable, highly diverse beings into a catchall bag that functions to flaunt the standalone, elevated category of “human.”¹⁶

Linguistic messaging thus covertly re-inscribes the divide—a divide not even remotely innocent but ordered through unequal status, privilege, and power. So while human-animal inequality is violently exercised within *systems* (for example, CAFOs, biomedical labs, experimental breeding facilities, industrial fishing regimes, and governmental extermination programs), the ideology that undergirds structural violence has also seeped into and partially hijacked human *lifeworlds*.¹⁷

The approaches championed by the animal justice movement are rebelling against the rigid binary that underpins the misery of animals. By the same token, undoing that binary endeavors to free humans from the strange “forgetting” that we are, ourselves, animals.¹⁸ The first approach (emphasizing similarity) reveals the inner lives and lifeways of animals and the ample overlap with those of humans. The second approach (Vive la différence!) discloses the diversified tapestries of animal being as incommensurable realities unamenable to “higher” and “lower” classifications.

Ongoing revelations of undeniable similarities and fascinating differences among all animals are spreading globally. Citizen science and the “infinite conversation” on the worldwide web are amplifying the *animal turn*—the turn demanding justice. The pleas are proliferating: Mercy for farm animals! Freedom for wild ones! Tolerance and hospitality for urban and rural neighbors! Animal justice demands are a *cri de coeur* to *remember* the love for animals that has always suffused human lifeworlds. None remember better than those who did not forget.

“All our Relations”: Indigenous People and Animal Worlds

Indigenous people never posited a Differential Imperative to order human and animal worlds.¹⁹ Animals (alongside other nonhumans) held a place of esteem in indigenous lives. Native peoples’ subsistence practices, origin stories, naming conventions, spiritual beliefs, and ceremonial expressions enunciate a lived paradigm of kinship among all beings. Human and animal realms are rife with reciprocal transformations and communications. Animals feature in intimate bonds with humans as ancestors, teachers, friends, and allies, as well as co-voyagers in earthly life, persons in themselves, and attentive observers of human beings.

In his classic essay “Why Look at Animals?” John Berger noted that “animals are always observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance.”²⁰ His comment does not pertain to indigenous people who have been cognizant of the ways animals watch and listen to humans

attentively, and even reach out. “One should pay attention to even the smallest crawling creature,” Black Elk advised. “Even the smallest ant may wish to communicate with a man.”²¹ Elsewhere, Black Elk wrote about a little red-breasted bird who came to him during a vision quest. Sitting on a post before him, the little bird spoke: “Friend, be attentive as you walk!”²²

Socioeconomic orders founded on a gaping chasm between “human” and “animal” stripped animals of the faculty to observe human beings with discernment. Denying animals their wakeful being is integral to their debasement and mandatory for the actualities of structural violence. When chickens are tightly piled in cages, sows crammed in crates, bulls forced to deliver their semen, wolves fumigated out of dens or gunned down from aircraft, sharks finned and tossed, bears caged and “milked,” cetaceans trapped and massacred, fish trawled by tonnage, and so on—none of these actions are regarded as experienced and witnessed by subjects. Violence can be exercised without qualms, for the discerning presence of animals has been erased. That erasure shields human *conscience*—the most universal and powerful force of transformation in human life—from seeing human brutality. Denying animals their awake presence in the world, tragically yet fittingly, lets humans sleepwalk through the unseemly and the egregious.

Native people utilized animals for their livelihoods in a variety of ways. Yet such uses, especially when involving killing and suffering, were accompanied by ritual expressions of gratitude, appeasement, and remorse. Moreover, using animals was counterbalanced by deliberate endeavors to make good every part of their bodies and to eschew waste. In such gestures of reverence, indigenous people model integrity in our relations with animals, honoring the dignity of both animal and human worlds.²³

Our Deepest Reality and Highest Aspiration

Facing the dissonance of violence and love in human-animal relations, we may circle back to the question: Which of these realities best reflects who we are and aspire to be? Threading the explored themes suggests an answer.

In recognizing the sociohistorical production of the human-animal hierarchy, we see that the domination of animals is neither a biological nor a God-given order. There is no natural nor ordained fact of the matter, only a socially constructed unjust arrangement that begs to be undone.

Indigenous societies did not espouse human-animal segregation but dwelt with animals in kinship. To be sure, native people were not above the capacity for cruelty nor beyond cooptation by settler-colonialist impositions. Yet the ways, stories, and animist perspectives they have bequeathed embody a subject-to-subject relationship with animals that is aspirational for all humankind.

This aspiration may be closer to realization than we imagine. For the indigenous ethos of relatedness echoes broadly in the cherishing of animals in human lifeworlds. Solidarity with animals, nurtured in ancient wisdom ways, endures as *immanent* within the social body where varieties of affection for animals flourish. While the Differential Imperative has been weaponized by systems—sanctioning all manner of violence against animals—the myth of a human-animal hierarchy never fully colonized human lifeworlds wherein ties of community reside. Thus, fortified institutions and narrow interests that subjugate animals have no existential upper hand vis-à-vis the timeless manifestations of caring alignment with animals that is universal to human experience. Our deepest reality and highest aspiration lie with the latter.

Transforming Human-Animal Relations Is Key

The violence pervading the animal economy is unleashing pandemonium across the planet, as dominating animals has become coextensive with global environmental destruction. Most especially, large-scale animal agriculture (particularly CAFOs and feed monocultures) and defaunation (notably, industrial fishing and bushmeat for remote markets) are lead causes of tropical deforestation, species extinctions, ecological impoverishment, agrochemical and factory-farm pollution, pollinator declines, rapid climate change, freshwater depletion, soil degradation, and infectious epidemic disease.²⁴ These dire trends and their synergies—driven to a considerable extent by the overpopulation of livestock and the depopulation of wild animals—are mounting. Structural violence against animal bodies and animal habitats is drawing all complex life into peril. The only thing that remains unclear—should present trends continue—is the timing and exact nature of the coming Barbarization.²⁵

The liberation of animals will not only end their unnecessary suffering, free them toward authentic being and becoming, and align with humanity's abiding reality and aspirations. It will also go a long way toward restoring a thriving Earth ecosystem. Honoring our animal kin would have us, first and foremost, abolishing CAFOs and protecting wild animals and their homes.²⁶ How can we attain

these aims in tandem? We must gradually reduce the global population of livestock while allowing the populations of wild animals to rebound toward the abundances that safeguard their long-term viability.²⁷ One needed societal transformation to achieve this is clear: By embracing mostly plant-based eating, we help support the well-being of both farm and wild animals, swerve our planetary course away from disaster, and open the way toward multispecies flourishing.²⁸

In the Modern Era, the violent subjugation of animals is a substantial driver of the ecological trends that are jeopardizing humanity's long-term well-being and even survival. The domination of animals also goes hand-in-hand with the exploitation of powerless human subgroups and the unequal burden of disease and mortality among classes of people. Thus, superseding systems that exercise violence over animals is urgently needed for the equity and healing of both animal and human worlds. Solidarity with animals and solidarity with humans are entangled imperatives and strategies in the search for a Great Transition.

Endnotes

1. See Jody Emel and Jennifer Wolch, "Witnessing the Animal Moment," in Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel, eds., *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands* (New York: Verso, 1998), 1–24; Steven McMullen, *Animals and the Economy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Jo-Anne McArthur and Keith Wilson, eds., *Hidden: Animals in the Anthropocene* (New York: We Animals Media, 2021).
2. The scenario terminology comes from Paul Raskin et al., *The Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead* (Boston: Stockholm Environment Institute, 2002).
3. Hal Herzog, *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It's So Hard to Think Straight about Animals* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010).
4. See, for example, Paul Shepard, *Others: How Animals Made Us Human* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1996).
5. Jürgen Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1 (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).
6. John Rodman, "Paradigm Change in Political Science: An Ecological Perspective," *American Behavioral Scientist* 24, no. 1 (1980): 49–78.
7. Gary Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).
8. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum, 1944; 1972); Matthew Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals: Identity, Difference, Indistinction* (Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015).
9. James Valentine quoted in Arran Stibbe, *Animals Erased: Discourse, Ecology, and Reconnection with the Natural World* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012), 39.

10. See Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: The Definitive Classic of the Animal Movement*, updated edition (New York: Harper Perennial, 1975; 2009); Martha Nussbaum, "The Moral Status of Animals," *Chronicle of Higher Education* February 3, 2006, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-moral-status-of-animals/>; Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Lori Gruen, *The Ethics of Captivity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
11. Richie Nimmo, "The Making of the Human: Anthropocentrism in Modern Social Thought," in Rob Boddice, ed., *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environment* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
12. Calarco, op. cit.
13. Marc Bekoff, *The Animal Manifesto: Six Reasons for Expanding our Compassion Footprint* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2010); Carl Safina, *Beyond Words: What Animals Think and Feel* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015); Andrew Rowan et al., "Animal Sentience: History, Science, and Politics," *Animal Sentience* 31, no. 1 (2021).
14. Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).
15. There are many ways in which the human-animal hierarchy is transmitted and inculcated; here I call attention to language.
16. Derrida, op. cit.
17. CAFOs is the acronym for Confined Animal Feeding Operations, otherwise known as factory farms. For expositions of CAFO conditions see, for example, Daniel Imhoff, ed., *The CAFO Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Animal Factories* (Berkeley: Watershed Media, 2010); McArthur and Wilson eds., op. cit.
18. Melanie Challenger, *How to Be Animal: A New History of What it Means to be Human* (New York: Penguin Books, 2021).
19. Vanessa Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency among Humans and Non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour!)," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2, no. 1 (2013): 20–34.
20. John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" in Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald, eds., *The Animals Reader* (Oxford, UK: 1980; 2007), 257.
21. Black Elk quoted in Linda Hogan, *The Radiant Lives of Animals* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2020): 84.
22. Black Elk, *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's Account of the Seven Rites of the Oglala Sioux* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953; 1989), 64.
23. Kekuhi Kealiikanakaoleohaililani and Christian Giardina, "Embracing the Sacred: An Indigenous Framework for Tomorrow's Sustainability Science," *Sustainability Science* 11 (2016): 57–67.
24. See Sean Maxwell et al., "Biodiversity: The Ravages of Guns, Nets and Bulldozers," *Nature* 536 (2016): 143–145; Bruce Campbell et al., "Agriculture as a Major Driver of the Earth System Exceeding Planetary Boundaries," *Ecology and Society* 22, no. 4 (2017): 8; Walter Willett et al., "Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT-Lancet Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems," *The Lancet Commissions* 393, no. 10170 (2019): 447–492; Eileen Crist, "COVID-19, the Industrial Food System, and Inclusive Justice," in P. Clayton et al., eds., *The New Possible: Visions of Our World Beyond Crisis* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021).
25. Raskin et al., op. cit.

26. See Eileen Crist, "Shutter the Factory Farms," *Earth Tongues*, February 26, 2021, <https://blog.ecologicalcitizen.net/2021/02/26/shutter-the-factory-farms/>; Callum Roberts et al., "Marine Reserves Can Mitigate and Promote Adaptation to Climate Change," *PNAS* 114, no. 24 (2017): 61677–6175, <http://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/early/2017/05/31/1701262114.full.pdf>; Global Rewilding Alliance "Animate the Carbon Cycle," 2021, accessed November 1, 2022, <https://rewildingglobal.org/animate-the-carbon-cycle>.

27. See Freya Mathews, "From Biodiversity-Based Conservation to an Ethic of Bio-proportionality," *Biological Conservation* 200 (2016): 140–148.

28. Brian Machovina, Kenneth Feeley, and William Ripple, "Biodiversity Conservation: The Key is Reducing Meat Consumption," *Science of the Total Environment* 536 (2015): 419–431; Hannah Ritchie, "If the World Adopted a Plant-Based Diet We Would Reduce Agricultural Land Use from 4 Billion to 1 Billion Hectares," OurWorldInData.org, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/land-use-diets>.

About the Author



Eileen Crist is an Emeritus Professor of Science, Technology, and Society at Virginia Tech, where she taught for twenty-two years. Her work focuses on the extinction crisis and destruction of wild places, pathways to halt these trends, and inquiries surrounding humanity's relationship with the planet. She is the author of *Abundant Earth: Toward an Ecological Civilization* and co-editor of a number of books, including *Gaia in Turmoil: Climate Change, Biodepletion, and Earth Ethics in an Age of Crisis* and *Keeping the Wild: Against the Domestication of Earth*. She is Associate Editor of the online journal *The Ecological Citizen* and regular contributor to the blog *Earth Tongues*. She holds a PhD in sociology from Boston University.



Panel 1: Perspectives



Lessons from Evolutionary Biology

David Barash

In her excellent stage-setting piece, Eileen Crist touches effectively on many of the ethical and practical dimensions of our insufficiently realized solidarity with animals. Rather than simply reiterate her points, I will suggest a way of understanding why recognition of this solidarity has been so elusive, especially in the West. Part of my argument is that trans-species solidarity is not something for us to strive for; it already exists. The problem is recognizing this fact.

A key obstacle—although, assuredly, not the only one—lies in the underlying theology of the three Abrahamic religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. As historian Lynn White pointed out in a now-classic-article, the West largely received its marching orders from the Bible vis-à-vis the rest of the natural world.¹ We're on top, the ones who really count, the apples of God's eye, placed here to subdue those lesser creatures and charged to be fruitful and multiply, regardless of ecological consequences (which, to be fair, were not mentioned, or even recognized at the time). Full speed ahead.

There is, admittedly, a movement in support of environmental stewardship (which sometimes includes nonhuman animals), but it is pitifully small and inadequate given the work it has to do: undoing the theologically driven harm generated by its far more widely accepted antecedents.

I am an evolutionary biologist. But one needn't be a biologist of any sort to recognize the primary take-home message of evolution: namely, continuity of all life forms. It is precisely this continuity that makes solidarity with other organisms not only scientifically justified but quite literally unavoidable—whether we like it or not. Alas, a significant strand of Western thought in particular does not like it. Some find it demeaning that we are deeply and irrevocably connected to nonhuman animals; others find it an inconvenient truth, given the many uses to which *Homo sapiens* puts other species and the reality that to acknowledge organic solidarity

would make it extremely difficult to continue profitable and convenient business as usual.

My limited goal at present is to gesture toward one of the underlying causes of our current “differential imperative,” which Eileen Crist so ably described: that based on religious dogma. Specifically, I want to draw attention to the matter of our supposed difference from other animals, the presumption that they are made of mere matter whereas we, albeit also material, are ineffably more than that. We, and we alone, are widely reputed to be made in the image of God, chips off the Old Divine Block. We have souls, and they do not. I believe, deep in the depths of my own non-existent soul, that unless and until our species gets over this soul-stuff nonsense, we will never be able to acknowledge our true organic solidarity with other animals.

There has been no end to well-meaning efforts to identify differences between human beings and other animals, most of which (play, tool use, complex communication, cultural transmission, and the like) have been stunningly unsuccessful. This is not to deny differences; after all, every species is different from every other. And we will wait in vain for a non-human animal to contribute to the present GTI discussion, notwithstanding our shared interest in the topic. But one seeks in vain for a qualitative discontinuity except for the nefarious claim that we, and we uniquely, have been ensouled.

A few years ago, I suggested that it would be not only possible but highly desirable to engineer human-chimp hybrids—more likely, chimeras—because the existence of “humanzees” or “chimphumans” would make it extremely difficult and maybe impossible to maintain the hurtful fiction that we have been uniquely endowed with a soul-based, immaterial, and immortal spark of the divine whereas they, poor base creatures, have been left out in the cosmic cold.²

I am reminded of the old labor-organizing song “Solidarity Forever,” with its concluding chorus “... for the union makes us strong.” I would like to think that our union with other animals also makes us strong, although it is also likely that recognizing such union will, at least in the short term, make us emotionally conflicted, not to mention economically weaker or, at least, sorely challenged. That particular labor song endeavored to stimulate solidarity in part by over-promising on the forever front, and whereas our solidarity with other life forms hasn’t yet been forever, 4+ billion years comes pretty close.

It was a wrenching realization for our forebears to grant that Copernicus, Kepler, Galileo, et al., were correct that we aren't the center of the universe (or even of the solar system). Our psyches resist the realization that our infantile selves are not central to the social world, either. Let us hope that someday, somehow, we can also overcome the delusion that we are uniquely endowed with a dose of ectoplasmic fairy dust that renders us central to the living world, a blessing from which our fellow creatures have been excluded.

Endnotes

1. Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155 (1967): 1203–1207.
2. David Barash, "It's Time to Make Human-Chimp Hybrids," *Nautilus*, March 5, 2018, https://nautil.us/its-time-to-make-human_chimp-hybrids-237003/.

About the Author



David Barash is an evolutionary biologist, peace activist, and Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Washington. His research focuses on understanding the underlying evolutionary factors influencing human behavior. He has written many books, most recently *Through a Glass Brightly: Using Science to See Our Species as We Really Are* and *Strength Through Peace: Happiness and Demilitarization in Costa Rica*, and *What the World Can Learn from a Tiny Central American Country* (with Judith Lipton). He holds a PhD in zoology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Enlarging the Ethical Imperative

J. Baird Callicott

Eileen Crist's eloquent opening essay is the best that I have ever had the pleasure to read on "animal ethics," if that is not too cramped a genre in which to locate it. That may have something to do with her academic background in sociology and science generally, rather than in academic philosophy.

Since the mid-1970s, animal ethics has been theorized mostly by applied philosophers, straightjacketed, unfortunately, by the hoary and threadbare ethical paradigms that they apply, off the shelf. The two trendsetters are Peter Singer, who straightforwardly applies utilitarianism to the animal question in ethics, and the late Tom Regan, who applies a modified version of Kantian deontology.¹ Although these two reigning paradigms are regarded as diametrically opposed and irreconcilable—the former based on consequences (the greatest happiness for the greatest number), the latter on principles (do the right thing, let the chips fall where they may)—they share two unacknowledged and largely unnoticed assumptions.

The first is an essence/accident schema going back to Aristotle. Thus, the central question becomes what essential property entitles a being to moral consideration, Singer asks, or moral rights, asks Regan. Their answers, respectively, are sentience and a robust subjectivity. All other properties—sex, race, religion, etc., AND species membership—are accidents. The second is that the wellspring of morality is reason: indeed, reason reduced to non-contradiction, the most basic law of logic. From the utilitarian point of view, one would be inconsistent to treat equal interests unequally. Thus, if all sentient beings have an interest in freedom from suffering, then we must give equal consideration to all such interests regardless of species, whether we find koala bears lovable or cane toads loathsome. Sympathy, compassion, affection—these have nothing to do with it. From a deontological point of view, if one wills such a maxim as Do

No Harm to be a universally binding moral principle, but makes an exception for oneself or for one's species—harming deer, let's say, for the sake of sport and meat—then one is caught in a contradiction of the will.

These two pillars of philosophical animal ethics thus only perpetuate what Eileen Crist, following John Rodman, calls the “differential imperative.” For Aristotle (and, implicitly, for most Western philosophers thereafter), *Anthropos* is the rational animal. Reason is our essential differentia; all other properties are accidental. That sets humans apart as the only moral *agents*, but not as the only moral *patients*. As a corollary to this, all other animals, since (supposedly) lacking reason, are not moral agents, if they are agents at all.

What makes Crist's contribution unique is that she eschews the age-old Western philosophical and theological anthropocentrism hidden in the superficial non-anthropocentrism of conventional animal ethics. Instead, she offers a two-pronged science-based foundation for animal ethics: (1) physical, neurological, emotional, and cognitive “similarities,” following upon evolutionary continuity; and (2) “diversity” of ways of being animal. The human way of being animal is but one way, nor should it be assumed that it is the superior way or even the most desirable way. Indeed, the more science reveals about non-human animal sensoria, cognition, and lifeways, the humbler we become.

I would add a third science-based foundation for animal ethics: contemporary evolutionary moral psychology. Following Darwin's account of “the moral sense” in *The Descent of Man*, evolutionary moral psychology locates the wellspring of human ethics not in reason but in “affect”: feelings, such as love, sympathy, and benevolence. But this science-based foundation for animal ethics is implicit in Crist's opening essay, confirmed by her very first words “Violence and Love”—not, as a conventional animal ethicist might have written her subtitle, something on the order of “Violence and Reason.” Darwin found these same sentiments manifest among many non-human animals and explained how they evolved by natural selection as facilitating social bonding, thus enabling cooperation in their collective struggles for existence.

Crist's discussion of the relationship of Indigenous peoples to other animals is confirmed by my own case study of American Indian environmental ethics using a set of remarkable narratives, collected, during the first decade of the twentieth century, by William Jones, the first American

Indian anthropologist.² In addition to the themes of such stories that Crist identifies are tales of human-animal marriages, among them “The Woman Who Married a Beaver” and “Clothed-in-Fur.” To the Western sensibility, such stories make no sense at all. But from the Indigenous perspective, they affirm ties of kinship between the human community and other-than-human animal communities, which establishes a basis for visiting one another and exchanging gifts. The beavers, the moose, and the other nonhuman in-laws of the Anishnaabeg willingly give what they have in abundance—their flesh and fur—and their human relatives, in return, give what they have in abundance—tobacco, knives, combs, and other cultivars and artifacts. Respect is paramount, and that respect need be both mutual and reciprocal, as the tale of “The Moose and His Offspring” reveals. Against the admonitions of his father, an adolescent moose contemns the hunters coming to visit the moose lodge and suffers an ignominious fate for his impertinence. His parents go home with the hunters and return with all sorts of wonderful things, while the young moose gets nothing.

Considering this precedent, Crist makes it clear that violence and love might be compatible after all. Those, however, were the Old Ways, and, for the vast majority of contemporary humans, their time is long past. So how now can love and violence be conjoined? In *Animals and Why They Matter*, the late British philosopher Mary Midgley points out that we human animals have lived in mixed-species communities since the advent of domestication.³ Midgley argues that the formation of mixed communities was not a matter of humans capturing and enslaving members of other species, but of sensitivity by both parties to the social signals of the other. Mixed communities formed on the basis of mutual advantage, an implicit social contract. Dogs, cats, and several other kinds of small animal are regarded by many of their human intimates as family members and some live, as Crist notes, a life of luxury. Horses and burros have long associated with *Homo sapiens* as partners in labor, transportation, sport, and war. And although cross-species bonds between individuals are often deeply and complexly emotional, such mixed communities are not quasi-familial. Then there are the mixed communities that look at first like a bad bargain for the non-human members of them, who wind up being slaughtered and eaten. But one might easily imagine that protection from predation, starvation, and severe weather, followed by a sudden, swift, and painless death, might not be such a bad deal. Industrial-scale animal agriculture represents a betrayal, an abrogation of such an implicit social contract.

Eileen Crist hints ever so faintly at a practical way forward, which is also a way to uphold the human end of the mixed-community social contract with those animals, which was forged during the Neolithic: “embracing mostly plant-based eating”—which leaves room for a little non-plant eating. Necessarily so, if we are to honor our end of the bargain. The most powerful argument for a universal vegan diet is ecological and environmental, a point Crist implicitly makes and to which I need add nothing. But then what would happen to domestic cattle, pigs, chickens, etc.? Their populations would dwindle to the size of museum specimens. So, for our sakes as well as theirs, we need to “reduce the population of livestock,” as Crist proposes, but not effectively exterminate those populations. And the most practical way of doing so is to step away from the industrial animal economy of scale, which exists to make animal-based eating cheap. Thus, if one scrupulously purchases only animal foods raised locally, organically, and humanely, one can only eat such foods sparingly because, costing more to produce with care at a small scale, they are necessarily more expensive. Is that anything more than virtue signaling? It can be if it builds a movement strong enough to implement policies, regulations, and laws that mandate small-scale, organic, and humane animal agriculture.

Is that a pipe dream? Not if one European nation is any indicator: an incremental approach may one day reach that goal there and elsewhere. On top of already existing strict laws governing the treatment of farm animals, on September 25, 2022, the Swiss voted on a referendum that would prohibit *industrial-scale* animal agriculture in Switzerland and the products thereof imported from other countries. It failed. But that it got on the ballot at all is a step in the right direction and suggests that its chances of succeeding may increase with time.

Endnotes

1. See, for instance, Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethic for Our Treatment of Animals* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1975); Tom Regan, *The Case for Animal Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).
2. William Jones, *Ojibwa Texts*, 2 vols. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1917–1919).
3. Mary Midgley, *Animals and Why They Matter* (Athens, GA: Athens University of Georgia Press, 1998).

About the Author



J. Baird Callicott is Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus at the University of North Texas and co-editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*. Callicott has served the International Society for Environmental Ethics as President and Yale University as Bioethicist-in-Residence. He is the leading contemporary exponent of Aldo Leopold's land ethic and has elaborated an Earth ethic, *Thinking Like a Planet*, in response to climate change. His most recent book is *Greek Natural Philosophy: The Presocratics and Their Importance for Environmental Philosophy*.



Unlearning Human Exceptionalism

Melanie Challenger

Eileen Crist's powerful essay makes a sequence of essential points, but one of the most important is the dissonance between the systems that perpetuate and legitimize violence, exploitation, and denigration and the affiliative psychology that flourishes in the private and communal, allowing members of *Homo sapiens* to bond with animals of many different kinds. Crist asks of us: how are we to make sense of nations of pet lovers, readily sentimental about dogs and dolphins, who routinely tolerate, even participate in, the brutal oppression of other species?

Crist is right to signpost certain aspects of human psychology. Human individuals are various, and human cultures thrillingly diverse; yet we are also a species with common enough traits to offer all the solace of mutual understanding. Today, there are things we can understand about the human psychology of exploitation that can help us to make sense of humans as both animal lovers and animal oppressors.

Systems, however vast and convoluted, are made up of individual agents. In my youth, I studied the whaling industries of Europe and North America. As part of my research, I read a fair number of diaries of whalers. I also visited some of the sites where the industrial slaughter of whales (blue, fin, minke, and right whales, predominantly) unfolded, and today I live in an old whaling town in the north of England. The whaling industry was Europe and America's first oil industry, and it was a boom-and-bust affair. What struck me in the diaries of the men who participated in the industry was their regret about killing the animals. They were witness to the struggles of these huge creatures and experienced the mental "snag" of compassion. As moral agents, each participant in the killing and rendering of these animals had the opportunity to hesitate and to desist. Most often what got in the way was physical exhaustion and powerlessness. Those individuals with control were far away in the towns and cities of Europe

and North America removed from the stench and brutal reality of the whaling grounds. They could ignore the pitiless violence. The whales were discussed in terms of “units,” their physical beauty and autonomy translated into pure monetary terms as abstract as the oil that lit up the streets of Paris and New York.

Once many of the species in the major whaling grounds were reaching critical population declines, it became evident that more money could be accrued through the annihilation of the remaining whales, with the capital, than could be achieved through sustainable practice. It took collapse for good sense to prevail and a moratorium to be imposed. Even then, this was brokered on practical terms rather than as an act of moral awakening. It is tempting to blame the system alone for such blind rapaciousness. But those diaries are reminders that the whales were killed by individuals with the cognitive skills to make different choices. Each tree felled, each pig stunned, each elephant shot, each stoat trapped, each shark hooked has a human agent at the other end of it. And that human, in almost every case, has the capacity to have compassion for that slaughtered or oppressed being. The question is, what stops any of us from caring and altering the system from the inside out?

A clue lies in the different approaches we find in smaller cultures. Fifteen years ago, I spent some time with Inuit hunters, including several elders in Nunavut who had grown up on the old whaling camps of their fathers. There is no question that both communal harvest and lived experience of nonhuman animals supports the emergence of human cultures that sacralize the exploitation of other species and encode the natural knowledge that might prevent or limit overutilization. Nevertheless, that sacralization is also suggestive of a more complex picture. Humans are skilled mind-readers. We are highly social primates who gather lightning-fast insights into the intentions and physical states of other humans, and also other animals. We are cognizant of the harms we do. And so, we manage our exploitation of other species (and, indeed, of each other) through narrative and storytelling that shifts our psychology towards kinship or towards othering, even towards aggression. Our extraordinary mental and endocrinal toolkit can nudge us towards acts of caring and bonding, or towards acts of selfishness, exploitation, or violence.

In small societies that live in proximity to the animals they use, we find cultures that ease the disquiet of killing or utilizing other animals through respectful engagement. In the large, industrial

complexes of the modern world, the dominant story is one of human exceptionalism, which does the work of generating a vast edifice of reassurance and justification. Human exceptionalism is the moral story we use at the system level in large, industrial societies. But this is also echoed at the intimate, individual level within the system, in a feedback loop. For the individual who finds themselves bound up in an industry of many parts that is facilitated by an idea such as “humans are morally unique and superior and have dominion over all other life,” it is extremely difficult to respond as an active individual agent confronted by the obvious intelligence or distress of the animal whose life they are exploiting. Any dissonance is dealt with by the power of the exceptionalist idea, which commits the individual to a grand narrative about humanity and also shifts their psychology away from affiliation and towards exploitation. An exploitative mind at work attributes less mind or feeling to the one being exploited and shows little or no activation of the aspects of social cognition that engage with the signals or cues of another being’s agency. The contradiction of the slaughterhouse worker who returns home to a much-loved dog is explicable when we recognize that the companionship role of the dog negates the need for an exceptionalist framing. But you can guarantee that if our tastes were to shift to dog meat, narratives of human superiority would come to the rescue. Those whalers undoubtedly experienced reservations about what they were doing. But that was overridden by their connection to a system justifying private profit as a contribution to the collective dream of human superiority.

If we want to make real headway in altering our relationship to nonhuman animals, we must first unpack both the stories we tell about ourselves, and the ways these are embedded in our system and exploited for gain. And we must also each recognize that the stories we tell about our world physically alter us; they make temporary changes to our brain patterns and to our hormonal patterns and determine how we act in the world. As Crist points out, changing our relationship to animals requires us to first appreciate that we are animals too. That remains a truth we have found difficult to reconcile.

About the Author



Melanie Challenger is a British author and broadcaster on environmental history, philosophy of science, and bioethics. Her most recent books are *How to Be Animal: What It Means to Be Human* and the forthcoming volume *Animal Dignity: Philosophical Reflections on Non-Human Existence*. She is Deputy Co-Chair of the UK's Nuffield Council on Bioethics.



Steps to a Moral Revolution

Alexander Lautensach

Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents

The ways in which most human societies regard and treat animals are primarily informed by the ethics of anthropocentrism. It dominates mainstream environmental ethics that inform international practices and norms today. In a previous post, I argued that anthropocentrism presents a major cultural obstacle on the way to a Great Transition.¹ It imposes a fatal bias on our views on human procreation and progress; it espouses a self-defeating notion of human flourishing; it instrumentalizes all non-humans and our ecological relationships with them, which not only sets us up for ecological suicide but prevents us from feeling solidarity with animals. In her impassioned introductory essay, Crist criticized the anthropocentric “differential imperative” for its self-defeating and logically flawed rationale.

Beyond Western civilization, and throughout many centuries, anthropocentric value priorities—especially under strong anthropocentrism, which recognizes no intrinsic value for non-humans—have shaped the ways in which animals were treated in many cultures. This galvanized permissive attitudes towards the casual mistreatment, abuse, mutilation, murder, and extinction of animals for the sake of cheap resources, recreation, entertainment and rituals, economic growth, and the continuous expansion of our living space.

The growth of our numbers also contributes to the problem. The gravity of suffering depends on the degree of cruelty in our treatment of animals, and on the number of people engaging in such cruelty—meaning that a CAFO, or an entire boatful of live sheep crossing the Indian Ocean, are more objectionable than one mistreated animal. By the same token, millions of hunters worldwide devastating wildlife with no worse intention than to feed their families amount to a veritable scourge on the animal kingdom. This collective dimension must be

considered when we evaluate present-day society. Almost fifty times as much biomass is tied up in our single species plus our livestock as is found in all the remaining wild terrestrial mammals.²

As several contributors have noted, the general mistreatment of animals and the ways in which proponents attempt to morally justify it causes harm elsewhere. “Othering” and devaluing animals makes it easy to devalue non-human life, with all the problematic consequences of ecocide and environmental deterioration that confront humanity in the Anthropocene. Discrimination and mistreatment of ethnic or cultural minorities and medically disadvantaged people seem permissible once they are defined as sub-human outgroups, akin to “animals,” with the help of misguided theories of anthropology or religion. Also, cruelty towards animals is often accompanied by, or paves the way towards, cruelty towards humans. Blindness to Peter Singer’s accusations

of speciesism, or to Jeremy Bentham’s appeal to capacities for suffering, opens the door to justifications of cruelty towards virtually anyone, supported by widespread immoral consensus. In Western cultures, the legal foundation of such neglectful and abusive behavior derives from Roman property law, which enshrined patriarchal domination over all family members and which reduced slaves and animals to chattel.³

A Call for Moral Revolution

From the preceding, it seems likely that the persistent worldwide presence of racism, bigotry, and violence could not be effectively reduced unless greater efforts are made towards compassion for animals. Reaching beyond that goal towards a GT, abandoning anthropocentrism appears as a precondition. Solidarity with animals would emerge conjointly, for the reasons stated above. A GT requires a wider solidarity with non-human nature, which is essential for any effective course change towards a sustainable, secure future. Thus, solidarity with animals would develop both as a consequence of, and a prerequisite for, the kind of fundamental revolution in mainstream moralities that would render a GT of any sort possible.

In order to have that effect, this moral revolution must move people to abandon the exploitative ethics that have driven us into ecological overshoot, and to embrace biocentric and ecocentric

values instead. It must extend globally, affecting major cultures and religions to the extent that leaders and followers consent to the new norms and their cultural enforcement.

Throughout human history, cultures have changed their dominant ethics.⁴ Yet, it seems difficult to imagine a set of circumstances that might trigger a moral revolution of the magnitude required for solidarity with animals. Value changes imposed in a top-down manner seldom pass the test of time unless they are also supported from below by popular consensus. A case in point is contemporary Iran. Moral revolutions are not the outcome of strategizing, although they may be influenced by political strategies for a time. They also don't occur randomly, but are brought about by coalescences of human agency.

Enacting Change

If the foundation of relentless human exceptionalism could somehow be removed or weakened, current practices towards animals would be questioned by most people and become culturally unsustainable. The greatest upheavals in dominant values correlate with the emergence of a new religion, or with the fundamental reformation of an existing religion. Next on the list are surges of cultural innovation, such as the ones that led to abolitions of slavery or the empowerment of women. Severe catastrophes such as famines or epidemics can also lead to rapid changes in dominant moral norms, such as proscriptions against the wasting of food or social proximity.

I fear that the mere presence of logical contradictions in the differential imperative is not sufficiently strong to trigger such a transformation. Too many other, intra-human double standards raise our outrage, such as the one between genders. Neither the scientific evidence suggesting a continuum of sentience nor the emphasis on universally shared qualities in the animal kingdom seems likely to conscientize most of humanity against our collective brutality. Even in the midst of famine, disasters, conflict, and chaos, humanity may only become more paranoid and again identify nature as the enemy who denies us our precious human rights.

Yet, there is opportunity for decisive action. Linda McCartney's famous dictum "If abattoirs had glass walls, we would all be vegetarians" is confirmed daily by numerous examples of schoolchildren who were exposed to the atrocities of a CAFO or meat processing plant—much

to the consternation of morally hardened parents. It seems that the practical perpetuation of the differential imperative is becoming increasingly difficult without deception and obfuscation. The opportunity for action lies in their exposure. Intensifying educational efforts and exposing moral double standards in conventional schooling hold promise in that regard. I love Melanie Joy's idea of a "retriever burger"!

As a complementary strategy, the motives and excuses for animal abuse can be eroded. Non-essential motives, such as the pet trade, production of aphrodisiacs or cosmetics, or training in circuses, make for relatively easy targets. Freeing up bioproductive areas from agriculture in the course of "rewilding" programs, combined with decisive efforts to slow down further growth of our numbers and our ecological overshoot, could ease the pressure on wildlife. As our numbers finally decrease towards a sustainable level, the motives for intensified corporatized production of animal protein to "feed the world" will wane.

A likely precondition for a GT is the adoption of plant-based diets by most of humanity. Such appeals rest on our deep evolutionary kinship and commonalities with non-humans, and on the comfort and moral support that solidarity with non-humans can provide at times of crisis. Even in medical research, appeals to kinship are driving the extension of existing moral codes to include animals. One way or another, our brutal "War against Nature" and its impact on animals will one day come to an end—hopefully a Great Transition will be the occasion.⁵

Endnotes

1. The post was entitled "Beyond Anthropocentric Solidarity," (August 2021), <https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/global-solidarity-lautensach>. See also Alexander Lautensach, "Learning for Biosphere Security in a Crowded, Warming World," *The Ecological Citizen* 1(2): 171–178. <https://www.ecologicalcitizen.net/pdfs/v01n2-10.pdf>
2. Yinon M. Bar-On, Rob Phillips, and Ron Milo, "The Biomass Distribution on Earth," *PNAS* (2018): 115 (25): 6506–6511. <https://www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1711842115>. They reported the ratio of Homo sapiens to domesticated food animals to wild ones as 36:60:4. A more recent estimate including pets states 34:62:4.
3. David Graeber and David Wengrow, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (Toronto: Allen Lane, 2021), 508 ff.
4. Slavery was most likely abolished multiple times in history in multiple places; very possibly, the same is true for war. See Graeber and Wengrow (op. cit.), 523.
5. Ronnie Hawkins, "Our War Against Nature," in *Human Security in World Affairs: Problems and Opportunities*, eds. Alexander and Sabina Lautensach, 2nd edition (Prince George, Canada: University of Northern British Columbia, 2020), ch11 and 12, <https://opentextbc.ca/humansecurity/>

About the Author



Alexander Lautensach is an Associate Professor at the School of Education at the University of Northern British Columbia. His current research focuses on human ecology, cross-cultural education, and environmental ethics. He is the author of *Environmental Ethics for the Future: Rethinking Education to Achieve Sustainability and Survival How?: Education, Crisis, Diachronicity and the Transition to a Sustainable Future*, as well as associate editor of the *Journal of Human Security*. He holds a PhD from the University of Otago.



Hearing the Voiceless

Judith Lipton

First, thanks to Eileen Crist for a beautiful opening statement. Thanks as well to my fellow contributors. Of all of the discussions on the GTI, this has been the most profound, and I have learned a lot.

I suggest coupling our discussion with the recent [article](#) in Vox about the schism within the American Veterinary Medical Association about how best to cull (kill) animals in large numbers. Apparently, the AMVA condones VSD+, ventilation shutdown plus: sealing housing, reducing ventilation, and then turning up the temperature on captive critters. The animals die like a dog in a hot car. Tens of millions of fowl were killed this way after last year's bird flu epidemic. The veterinary schism is between those vets who are trained and employed to help animals and those who are employed to manage livestock, the nearly 10 billion land animals held in confinement in the US every year.

Should veterinarians represent the interests of animals or of the humans who own and profit from them or of those who enjoy animal flesh and skin and fur? Pets or profits? Many people show love and compassion to some pets, and yet condone their commodification and killing at the grocery store, shoe shop, and dinner table. How do we tolerate such contradictions? Psychologists call it splitting, denial, or compartmentalization. Another term is psychic numbing. *Homo sapiens* have many unconscious mental mechanisms to avoid reality or tilt it for self-serving ends. The same tricks are employed by those who promote the development of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons for "defense" and then go to church or synagogue or school and teach loving kindness. As Bertolt Brecht noted, we crave to be more kindly than we are.

There is no market in the US for coats made of cat fur, even angora, or furniture crafted from dog skin. It is easy to reject products made from our household pets. Most would not tolerate the cognitive dissonance required to make dog snout paté. But in China, the preferred form of dog meat is golden retriever, and they are bred as such. One group says yum, the other yuck. It depends on culture, point of view, and identification, not to mention awareness.

Crist valorizes indigenous peoples who lived in closer proximity to animals than modern urbanites and hence showed respect to their prey and habitat. There are still modern cultures that endorse the Buddhist vow to work for the benefit of all sentient beings or something similar. The key is mindfulness, seeing the oneness of all sentient beings, including animals, vegetables, and microbes. We are all one. I am the lamb and the lettuce, made of atoms from nuclear explosions in stars recycled for billions of years. Or as Kurt Vonnegut noted, poetically, God made mud, and some mud has the good luck to stand up for a little while.

Try this: use the Buddhist prayer before meals that begins, “Many labors have brought us this food, let us acknowledge and thank them.” For twenty minutes of silent meditation, visualize as many beings between you and your food as you can. Visualize the farmers who raised the food, the people who drove the tractors, and the trucks that brought it to market. Each of these people had parents. They were children. The grocery store workers, and the cooks. Each of these people have families and passions. Honeybees pollinated the plants, and birds spread seeds to grow more plants. Fertilizer came from manure from farm animals, but more likely sacks of chemicals devised by other people and prepared by more. Many humans brought us this food, and many plants and animals as well. But here it gets dicey. If you bought organic soy sauce from Japan, or organic brown rice from India, you know many labors and laborers worked hard, probably for little pay, and then it took a lot of fuel to import it across the Pacific. Unless you only eat locally grown organic plants, you fall into hypocrisy.

I thank the worms that made the soil rich and the microbes within me that make my food digestible. I can see the cloud in a flower and a flower in the cloud. The lotus that grows in the mud. I know I came from dust and shall return, if not to dust then ash. That insight lasts for a few days or weeks. Then I put on my cashmere sweater, made from the wool of sheep or goats who

were probably eaten after they were shaved. My boots are leather with sheepskin lining, dead cow skin, and sheep hair. Next thing you know, I am driving to the store to buy phở, made from dead cows and pigs. Greed quickly overcomes mindfulness. My brain goes into splitting, denial, or compartmentalization. We are often calm in the practice of hypocrisy.

Society as a whole and experts from many fields must address the fact that human beings are animals, just like their prey, dinner, or lunch, and the pyramid of power has no moral justification. We don't know much about animal consciousness. But all animals have receptors that influence their behavior, along with their feelings. They may not have the capacity to perform calculus, Bach, or pickle ball, but they sense and react. Plants have photoreceptors and release pheromones. Trees seem to communicate through underground fungal networks. Bacteria and fungi exhibit behavior such as "quorum sensing," cell-cell communication that allows them to adjust population density by gene regulation. Animals and plants work to propagate their genes and have software to do that. There is no evidence that *Homo sapiens* are uniquely different from other critters, except for the "differential imperative." *Homo sapiens* are not *Homo Sentience*.

How should we move to action, to save the planet from human greed and short-term thinking? It is as Einstein noted regarding nuclear war: Our way of thinking must change, or we drift towards unparalleled catastrophe, dragging most beings—sentient or not—with us.

I have a small amount of hope. Enough to play with my grandchildren. But no expectations. These beautiful beings may be doomed by human stupidity, greed, grandiosity, denial, and compartmentalization among the relatively small number of very wealthy people, mostly white, male, and well-educated, who run The System. They drag the voiceless with them. Those voiceless include all animals and plants and young people and old people and those who lack internet or the education and resources to subscribe to the Great Transition Initiative. The participants in this discussion are resourced and powerful. When we end this discussion, isn't that just another way of passing the buck?

About the Author



Judith Lipton is a psychiatrist and lifelong antiwar activist. She specializes in psychosomatic medicine and psycho-oncology, and is a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. However, since the early 1960s, her passion has been peace. In 1979, she founded the Washington chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), and was on the National Board and Executive Committee of both PSR and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. She currently serves on the Committee to Abolish Nuclear Weapons of PSR. She has co-authored eight books on war, aggression, and sex, most recently *Strength through Peace: How Demilitarization led to Peace and Happiness in Costa Rica*, and *What the Rest of the World Can Learn from a Tiny Tropical Nation*.



Expanding the Sustainability Agenda

William S. Lynn

I am delighted to respond to Eileen Crist's "Solidarity with Animals." With a strong commitment to social justice, Crist has long challenged human supremacy in both theory and practice as it applies to animals and nature. In doing so, she offers a shift in how we frame issues of ethics and sustainability.

In the dominant frame of "society" and "nature," humans are the pivot around which the world turns, and both the similarities and differences between people, other animals, and nature are lost or flattened. Sustainability as an ethical and practical matter becomes about human survival, and ecological integrity is an instrument prerequisite to this end.

Here and in her other writings, Crist helps us reframe our understanding of ethics and sustainability in terms of people, animals, and nature. This reframing allows us to see anew three distinct but co-constituting domains of moral and practical concern. She thereby opens conceptual space to consider our direct social and ecological responsibilities to nonhuman animals themselves.

That the Great Transition Initiative is even asking about solidarity with animals is significant and praiseworthy. The opposition in sustainability circles to considering animals as more than parts of ecosystems or vehicles of ecosystem services is notorious. Overt opposition to contemplating the intrinsic value and moral standing of animals was the most difficult dispute in the crafting of the Earth Charter. While the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) eventually adopted the Earth Charter as a guiding ethical vision, it remains a dead letter in practice, especially when it comes to nonhuman animals.

More recent dialogues around the Rights of Nature as well as Harmony with Nature have

routinely ignored animals as individual beings whose well-being is, at least in part, independent from our own. The International Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is also a laggard, focused on the values humans attribute to species and the natural world, not the intrinsic values and well-being of other animals in and of themselves.

To welcome animals into a discussion of sustainability, we must think past the well-worn insight that humans are also animals, or that as a species we are but one thread in the tapestry of life. Humanity's manifold effects on animals as individuals and social/ecological communities must be held ethically accountable, and such accountability has enormous implications for how we understand our obligations in a great transition.

Correcting for the marginalization of animals in sustainability raises the question of what it means to stand in solidarity with them. Crist highlights resistance to ideologies and systems that exploit animals. Anthropocentrism as an axiology, speciesism as a practice, human supremacy as a worldview, all are implicated in her critique and rightly so. Solidarity in this sense is critiquing and correcting what harms animals.

Without taking anything away from this incisive analysis, at [PAN Works](#) we flip the question of harm on its head and ask, "How ought we think and act to promote the well-being of animals"? Here, I want to highlight two possibilities: ethical renewal and rewilding.

Crist's essay is an example of ethical renewal. She not only charts one path to improving our ethical reasoning per se, but also deepens our understanding of what a great transition ought to envision and address.

Much of the debate about animals circulates around the utilitarianism of Peter Singer or Tom Regan's formulation of moral rights and duties. The views of Singer and Regan, while different in details, are both part of the axiomatic family of ethical theory, an outlook that treats ethical principles as moral truths to be applied top-down when answering normative problems regarding animals.

There is, however, a historically rich family of interpretive ethical reasoning, one that can speak to animals in diverse and nuanced ways. As I see it, Crist's ideas about solidarity with animals is part

of the interpretive tradition of ethics, something prefigured by John Rodman and his “The Dolphin Papers.”

In this family, ethical principles are moral insights used to reveal the moral issues at stake in specific cases. This is not top-down applied ethics, but a situated ethics of praxis. We interpret our ethical positions in light of a plurality of moral concepts matched to concrete problems in the real world. Crist’s detailed engagement with the materiality of structural violence against animals underscores the importance of such praxis.

In alignment with Crist’s suggestions, the interpretive family offers robust alternatives to the consequentialism and deontology of Singer and Regan, respectively. Some ethical theories focus on the cognitive and social capabilities of animals (i.e., the capabilities approach) or explore the presuppositions and meaning of ethical worldviews about animals (i.e., hermeneutics). Others focus on the interlocking oppression of patriarchy over animals and nature (i.e., ecofeminism) or how theories of justice illuminate what we owe animals and nature (i.e., multispecies justice). These and other interpretive theories transcend the duopoly of consequentialism and deontology and can renew our ethical thinking about sustainability and animals.

The second possibility, rewilding, reinforces the importance of Crist’s focus on justice.

Rewilding is often portrayed as a means of nature-based conservation in response to the climate emergency or the sixth extinction. Yet the early roots of rewilding emerged not as a means to save humanity, but as a practical response to the intrinsic value of wild animals and nature. Landscape-level conservation or the reintroduction of native predators and ecosystems engineers (e.g., wolves and beavers, respectively) were proactive means serving this ethical vision.

Crist’s recent writing on rewilding is distinctive for its emphasis on respecting human rights and democratic institutions. In this sense, rewilding is not only a matter of enlightened self-interest, but a demand for social justice amongst those harmed by the values and practices of human supremacy.

Nonetheless, rewilding remains a direct duty humans owe as a matter of restorative justice in a more-than-human world. Our collective depredations on animals and nature (as well as other

people) demands rectification if we are not only to survive but thrive together. Rewilding is thus a key means and measure by which we stand in solidarity with animals and their pursuit, if you will, of their own well-being.

About the Author



William S. Lynn is the founder of PAN Works, an independent nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the well-being of animals. He is also a research scientist in the Marsh Institute at Clark University and a research fellow at the social science think-tank Knology, and teaches graduate courses in the Anthrozoology program at Canisius College. He helped to found the journal *Ethics, Policy and Environment*, served as lead editor for the Political Animals section of the journal *Society and Animals*, and chaired the Ethics Specialist Group of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.



Anchoring the Ought in the Is

Freya Mathews

In her eloquent essay, Eileen Crist details the enormity of the crimes that humanity, via the political and economic apparatus of corporate states, is currently perpetrating against nonhuman animals. She sets out facts and arguments with great clarity but also manages to convey, in a manner characteristic of her work generally, something of the lived reality that lies behind the facts. Through the expressive power of her writing, she makes this vast but hidden realm of loss and misery painfully present to the reader's mind.

The picture that Crist evokes for us is one of a world in which the moral consideration that is, upon any degree of reflection, so manifestly due to animals is, at the structural level of society, systemically ignored and denied, and its absence normalized. Given the global-industrial scale of this violation, and the way it is so deeply woven into the political and economic fabric of modern civilization and so resistant to reform, we can only infer that when the interests of morality

and raw power collide, morality as a social tool is no match for power. But why this frailty? The function of morality is to show how we as humans ought to order our lives. How can something so crucial to the viability of society prove so ineffectual?

That is what I would like to examine in this brief piece. *Is* morality our only guide to how we ought to order our lives? Is the baffling fault in our treatment of animals, and often our treatment of one another as well, a fault not so much in ourselves as in our conception of ethics? Is there another conception of the normative root of society than the one we commonly invoke via the terms *morality* and *ethics*?

Perhaps. To explain this, let me introduce a distinction between two very different conceptions of the "ought" that lies at the root of society: the *axial* and the *deontic*. The *axial*, which is

associated with agrarianism and post-agrarian or industrial societies, aligns with our contemporary notion of “the ethical.” It emanates from societies whose economic system carved out a distinct sphere of human operations—of cultivation, domestication, and manufacture, all valorized under the banner of “culture”—against the neutral background of the “wild” or “nature.” Without moorings in any larger normative order than the fluctuating ends of their human members, such societies were originally held together by appeal to religious ideologies, generally imposed from above by rulers. Eventually however, in the so-called Axial Age (800-200 BCE), a more universal key to social cohesion was discovered: “the moral point of view.” To assume the moral point of view was to place oneself “in the shoes of others,” where such an expansion of ego-consciousness led to the Golden Rule, the realization that as the inner lives of other persons are no different from our own, their ends and interests are as entitled to sympathetic consideration as are ours. “Do unto others as you would that they would do unto you.” The Golden Rule became embedded in most of the religions that emerged during the Axial Age.

The *deontic* perspective (from Greek *déon*, meaning “that which is obligatory”), by contrast, is associated with pre-agrarian societies whose economic system of foraging and land custodianship required functional integration into the ecological environment rather than the carving out of a distinct sphere of purely human-referenced operations. Such functional integration into local ecologies called for a deep understanding of and conformity to the principles that ensured the ongoing flourishing and renewal of those ecosystems. While we might offer intimations of these principles today via relational terms such as *mutual adaptation*, *mutual accommodation*, *bio-synergy*, or *symbiosis*, they tended to figure in pre-agrarian societies themselves as *Law*, where Law consisted in protocols for acting and being that applied as much to human affairs as to the affairs of other-than-human-beings.

From the deontic perspective then, there were not two spheres, one of culture, lit up with meaning and purpose, and the other, of nature, shrouded in darkness. Rather, there was a unitive cosmos, a living whole animated by an originary will, a Law of self-unfolding and self-increase, to which the will-to-self-existence of every finite thing was tributary. The obligation of humans, from this perspective, was to align with Law. Because the ontological context of Law was holistic, Law could not be grasped merely from the outside, via observation and reason, but had also to be grasped

from the inside, via *feeling*—via attunement to the originary will as it moves in oneself. This is a quite different way of knowing, lost to our contemporary post-agrarian societies who place themselves outside the world-to-be-known. It is a way of knowing that ensures that, in the act of intuiting Law, one also falls under its sway. Pre-agrarian societies, guided by such Law, had no need for authoritarian rulers and ideologies to assure cohesion.

I develop these arguments further in my forthcoming book *The Dao of Civilization: A Letter to China*. But the main point I want to make here, in relation to the issue of animals, is that there may be a fatal flaw in the axial perspective: namely, the fact that, from the axial perspective, the question “Why be moral?” is ultimately unanswerable. Unless I happen to be already of an empathic or compassionate disposition, there is really no reason why I should treat the interests of others as on par with my own when clearly, from my perspective as an organism, they are not: I am in a special biological relation to my own interests, with unique responsibility for multiple aspects of my biological and hence existential functioning, a fact which the Golden Rule obfuscates. When I adopt the pre-agrarian standpoint, however, intuiting Law not through reason but through the highly differentiated modes of bodily engagement with environment that pre-agrarian praxis requires, then I experience Law as coincident with my own will, and the question “Why conform to Law?” does not arise.

Our current loss of the deontic perspective—our loss of knowledge of the great “Ought” that lies at the core of the cosmic “Is”—may then help to explain why our contemporary world is so broken. Axial ethics does indeed contribute important insights to contemporary consciousness. But while it is plainly as applicable to animals as to humans, insofar as animals have inner lives relative to which we can assume the “moral point of view,” the axial perspective cannot supply the kind of protocols that assure the ongoing regeneration of a living cosmos nor can it command assent when challenged by powerful interests, since it lacks epistemological self-evidence. For both these reasons, it may be inadequate as a normative guide for human societies.

Eileen Crist appeals in her essay to Indigenous paradigms of kinship amongst all beings as a referent and guide for modern societies. I am in strong agreement with this, but the ways of knowing that underlie such paradigms are rooted in protocols of thought and action deeply counter to those that shape the consciousness of modern civilization. We might perhaps then

need to devise new forms of praxis conducive to holistic forms of consciousness before such dwelling-in-kinship can become a shared reality for us today.

About the Author



Freya Mathews is Emeritus Professor of Environmental Philosophy at Latrobe University. She is the author of over one hundred books, articles, and essays on ecological philosophy, including *The Ecological Self* and *The Dao of Civilization: A Letter to China*. In addition to her research activities, she co-manages a private conservation estate in northern Victoria. She is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities. She holds a PhD from the University of London.



From Solidarity to Policy

Jerry Mitchell

The liberation of animals is compelling, yet the idea is fraught with practical complications when applied to societal public policy. In such an endeavor, it is first essential to recognize and discuss the obstacles to goal achievement. It is the discourse that matters.

In her essay, Eileen Crist summarizes well the position that human domination is a flawed belief because animals and people are obviously indistinct. But to actually foment policies in which animals and humans are treated the same would require nonhuman creatures to no longer be considered property. And to change their property status would necessitate the granting of personhood to animals. While some courts have wrangled with awarding animals juridical standing, neither constitutions nor statutes have yet to fully establish animals as persons. Assuming enough political will could materialize to change the legal status of animals, the next issue is precisely which ones are to be granted personhood. Dogs, cats, elephants, and monkeys might be worthy, but it is unclear, for example, if the rats that infest large cities would receive the same consideration. Should insects have human rights? All marine animals? Could airport operators control geese next to their runways to prevent them from being sucked into an airplane engine? To complicate matters further, what happens if the next zoonotic pandemic is caused by a virus that spills over from domestic pets to humans? Would it be illegal to cull sentient cats to save human lives?

There is a call to abolish Consolidated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs, or factory farms). The horrors of factory farming were first articulated by Ruth Harrison in 1964 and have since been exposed by a cavalcade of books, articles, websites, and documentaries. Even though the problems are well-known, eliminating the system is a tall order. Factory farms feed billions of people worldwide inexpensively and generate billions in profits for corporate conglomerates,

supported by veterinarians, advocacy groups, agricultural trade unions, and elected officials of every political persuasion. China is not diminishing but is instead expanding its footprint as the world's largest pork producer, with one of its new skyscraper facilities capable of slaughtering over a million pigs a year. In Europe and the United States, the animal welfare movement has adopted a compromised position that accepts meat and dairy products as long as there are humane conditions (free range, larger cages, etc.) and compassionate slaughtering mechanisms (the use of a bolt gun that renders an animal unconscious before killing). The turn toward plant-based and cultured meats and dairy is an obvious solution. However, building the alternative meat industry to a scale approximating animal food has been problematic, and the health benefits are questionable because of significant quantities of sodium and synthetic chemical ingredients. Hoping for a global population of vegans is another possibility, yet such a yearning runs afoul of cultures where meat consumption is a fundamental part of their self-identity. Cognitive dissonance in the human-animal relationship is not necessarily a sufficient rationale for changing long-held traditions. Furthermore, it is difficult to envision criminalizing the killing of cows, chickens, pigs, and turkeys for food.

The essay also calls for the protection of wild animals and their homes. Thus far, the primary means of achieving this goal has been through endangered species laws and treaties that protect particular animals and their habitats. There are also anti-poaching initiatives, rewilding programs in public parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation set-asides, and efforts to clean up microplastics in oceans. The problem with existing endangered species laws is that relatively few animals are involved. Only about 1,300 animals are classified as endangered or threatened in the US Endangered Species Act. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which more than 160 governments signed, lists slightly more than 5,000 endangered species globally. What it takes to gain protection among the 8.7 million species on earth is as much about economics as about animal interests. Even if additional species were added, it is unclear how best to safeguard them. Consider wild lions. At one time, lions could be found worldwide, only to now be isolated in decreasing numbers in India and several African nations. In Kenya, one solution has been the creation of lion sanctuaries where they can roam freely, as is their nature. But how to keep and protect them in the sanctuary? As constraints, electric fences kill other creatures, while floodlights on borders disturb people and other wildlife. Making the confines too small facilitates poaching because hunters can know exactly where the

lions live. Another issue is that lions in restricted spaces become too adept at killing other animals to the point that the lions become invasive. Wildlife management, which is basically another form of human domination, can easily turn to mismanagement. To give another example, the protection of wild horses in the American West has left them so prevalent as to upset ecosystems and to become traffic hazards.

Public policy is complicated. It is difficult to define problems that affect diverse animals and then to devise solutions that are legally sound, politically legitimate, culturally inclusive, administratively effective, and consumer-friendly. The initial phase of rational policymaking is to recognize these challenges. The premise is that reasoned debate focused on both limitations and possibilities fosters good policies. Recently, this is what occurred in the process that led Iceland to forbid whaling, India to ban the capture and confinement of dolphins, Austria to prohibit fur farming, and many states in the United States to outlaw greyhound racing.

As animal solidarity efforts progress, one way forward is to encourage a discourse that is built on practical and systematic policy analysis. Starting early, K-12 education might include the human-animal relationship as a subject in history and literature classes. The increasing adoption of meatless Monday programs in public schools is a way to initiate the dialogue. To help, the [Factory Farming Awareness Coalition](#) offers guest speakers for K-12 schools and colleges to inspire critical thinking about industrial agriculture. In colleges and universities, courses on animal welfare and rights can be standard parts of the curricula in the sciences, humanities, and liberal arts. Creating courses is relatively easy, especially when there is student interest as well as models to follow. Over 150 law schools in the United States already offer at least one seminar on animal law. Professional academic associations could likewise become involved. An example is the Animals and Society section of the American Sociological Association. Legislative bodies might also shift disputes on animal issues from agricultural and environmental committees to new bodies focused on animal welfare and rights. The number of politicians adopting animal policy platforms is increasing, most notably the Party for the Animals in the Netherlands. Animal policy advisory organizations in government can be created as well, such as the recently constituted Mayor's Office of Animal Welfare in New York City. By generally encouraging broad-based public deliberations, there is a potential for shaping the direction of the policy process so that problems are well-defined and solutions for animals are more likely to be successful.

About the Author



Jerry Mitchell is Professor of Public Policy in the Austin W. Marx School of Public and International Affairs at Baruch College, The City University of New York. He teaches a graduate-level public administration course on animal welfare and rights. His books include *Public Affairs in the Nation and New York*, and he is currently preparing a manuscript on animals in public policy. He holds a PhD from the University of Kansas.



Fostering Kinship

Gary Steiner

We spend many billions of dollars a year to care for our beloved “companion animals,” and yet the most recent United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization figures indicate that every year, worldwide, over seventy billion nonhuman land animals are killed for human consumption.¹ According to some estimates, that is almost as many nonhuman animals in one year as the total number of human beings ever to have existed. And if we add fish and other sea creatures, the numbers spike to likely over a trillion per year. Eileen Crist notes not only the staggering disconnect between our professed love for nonhuman animals and our violent abuse of them, but also the historical justification (or, perhaps better, rationalization) for the large-scale treatment of nonhuman animals as essentially insensate resources.

The terms in contemporary nonhuman animal studies used to describe the guiding ethos of human-nonhuman animal relations are exceptionalism and anthropocentrism. Human exceptionalism is the doctrine that human beings enjoy moral superiority over nonhuman beings in virtue of possessing some unique and morally significant capacity. Over the millennia, philosophers have sought to cite capacities such as tool use or culture to distinguish human beings, only to discover to their chagrin that these sorts of capacities continue to be observed in an increasing variety of nonhuman sentient beings. The last best hope for this sort of thinking has been to appeal to linguistic rationality (*logos*) as the feature that uniquely characterizes human beings and confers moral superiority on them. This appeal, however, raises some highly vexed questions and merits further consideration. What might outwardly appear to be a neutral and guileless observation (namely, that our ability to engage in predicative discourse, i.e., to formulate discrete units of meaning such as concepts and combine and evaluate them in subject-predicate form), establish abstract rules for conduct, etc., is the appropriate criterion for assessing moral status) proves to be motivated in advance by pointedly anthropocentric

prejudice, prejudice according to which it is vital to assert and preserve the place of human beings at the top of the moral hierarchy, and to the measure of which the *logos* criterion has been cut.

In the history of Western philosophy, thinkers have repeatedly retreated to the high ground of *logos* as the capacity that distinguishes and elevates human beings above the rest of the created world. Aristotle excludes nonhuman animals and excludes them categorically from community with humans on the grounds that they lack *logos* (linguistic/predicative rationality), and he ascribes the status of living property to nonhuman animals. St. Augustine acknowledges that nonhuman animals suffer at our hands, but states without qualification that their suffering has no moral claim on us inasmuch as they have—as in Aristotle—no community with us. St. Thomas Aquinas states that we have no direct moral obligations toward nonhuman animals and that the only reason to be kind to them is that being cruel toward nonhuman animals makes us more likely to be cruel to our fellow human beings (who have the benefit over nonhuman animals of having been created in the image of God and possessing the capacities for both faith and reason). In the modern age, Descartes proclaims human beings “the masters and possessors of nature” in virtue of our rational capacity, and he shows no scruple about performing vivisection (inasmuch as nonhuman animals are essentially nothing more than biological machines with no inner awareness). In a similar vein, Kant characterizes the human being as “the titular lord of nature,” freely sanctions the use of nonhuman animals as resources, and at one point goes so far as to classify nonhuman animals (domesticated ones, at any rate) as morally equivalent to fertile fields and crops such as potatoes.

At the same time, Kant expresses an ambivalence toward nonhuman animals when he acknowledges that they are sentient (rejecting the Cartesian thesis that they are incapable of mental representations or any sort of inner subjective awareness), suggesting that expressing a sense of gratitude for, say, an old horse who has served one well makes complete sense. Kant thus, if only against his own intention, acknowledges the very ambivalence about nonhuman animals that Crist makes the centerpiece of her remarks. The essential takeaway from Kant is that our anthropocentric leanings stand in an irreducible tension with the recognition that we ourselves are animals and that we have a great deal more in common with the rest of the animal world than we have historically been willing to acknowledge.

How should we respond to this contradiction? One way is to dig in and reinforce our

anthropocentric commitments. This is an approach that I see in a number of contemporary thinkers who purport to be calling human exceptionalism radically into question. Any thinker who proceeds from the proposition that it is the proper place of human beings to determine the fates of nonhuman animals is, I believe, making this very mistake—if only against their own best intention. A conspicuous indication of this approach is the confident assertion that we can (and to some extent do) know what the inner lives of nonhuman animals are like. But as Frans de Waal has noted, the first thing we ought to be asking ourselves is not which sorts of capacities different nonhuman animals possess, but rather whether we human beings are smart enough to know how smart nonhuman animals are.² After all, it is clear that linguistic rationality significantly influences our entire experience of ourselves and the world, and it would stand to reason that beings who are not rational like us (they are undeniably rational in a great many ways of their own) would encounter the world in ways that should be difficult if not incomprehensible for us. In this connection, I find the following two ideas worth taking seriously: Herwig Grimm's notion of the nonhuman "animal-in-itself" and Bernhard Taureck's "Entnützungsimperativ" or call to discontinue the use of nonhuman animals. These two thinkers call on us to proceed from a place of deep humility, one that acknowledges both our cognitive limitations and the background prejudices that are in play when we seek to consider nonhuman animals "objectively." Grimm proposes that we approach nonhuman animals anew, bereft of our historical prejudice, and seek to recognize and honor the essential otherness (potential incomprehensibility) of nonhuman animals. Taureck's ethical principle calls on us to cease the regime of dominion over nonhuman animals long enough to let them be the beings that they truly are—a status that has been denied to them through the regime of human dominion over them.

In my own work, I have argued for an ethic of "felt kinship" with nonhuman animals, one according to which all sentient creatures are full and direct members of the moral community—not in virtue of rational sophistication but in light of the capacity to struggle and suffer in life. After all, if cognitive sophistication were really the basis for moral status, why wouldn't smarter humans enjoy moral superiority over less intelligent humans? To apply the rationality criterion when comparing human and nonhuman animals but not when comparing different human beings with one another would be speciesism pure and simple.

A final note: Every time we stress that human beings are animals, too, but go on to compare “humans” and “animals, we reinscribe— if only unwittingly—the very divide that recent work has sought to undo.

Endnotes

1. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, “Crops and Livestock Products,” *FAOSTAT*, accessed December 15, 2022, <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/OCL>.
2. Frans de Waal, *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2017).
3. Herwig Grimm, “Das Tier an sich. Auf der Suche nach dem Menschen in der Tierethik,” in *Tiere. Der Mensch und seine Natur*, ed. Konrad Paul Liessmann (Vienna: Zsolnay, 2013); Bernhard Taureck, *Manifest des veganen Humanismus* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2015).

About the Author



Gary Steiner is Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Bucknell University, where he taught from 1987 to 2022. He is the author of four books on the moral status of nonhuman animals: *Anthropocentrism and Its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy*, *Animals and the Moral Community: Mental Life, Moral Status, and Kinship*, *Animals and the Limits of Postmodernism*, and *What We Owe to Nonhuman Animals: The Historical Pretensions of Reason and the Ideal of Felt Kinship*. He holds a PhD in philosophy from Yale University.



Greenwashing Greens

Angus Taylor

In her opening essay, Eileen Crist does a fine job of describing the massive structural violence against nonhuman animals, the “differential imperative” used to excuse this violence, and the ways in which the human/animal binary has been challenged by animal advocates. She rightly notes the role that the exploitation of animals plays in the growing ecological and social crises facing the world. The magnitude of the problem may be judged by the fact that governments seeking ways to tackle the climate crisis and biodiversity loss will not contemplate any action that would significantly curtail the meat industry, looking instead for technological fixes.¹ Resistance to animal liberation is entrenched even in many who deplore the power of major industries to block necessary societal transformation.

Studies of the cognitive, sensitive, and social lives of animals, coupled with several decades of debate among philosophers, have left the old doctrine of human exceptionalism with little intellectual credibility. No longer is it possible to maintain that a morally relevant line in the sand can be drawn between all humans and all nonhumans on the basis of some intrinsic capacity, like rationality or moral agency. No longer does it make sense to place humans at the pinnacle of some single hierarchy of value.

And yet the insistence that human beings are entitled to exploit other forms of sentient life to serve human purposes refuses to die. Instead, it is being reincarnated in the guise of ecological wisdom. Instead of domination rationalized on the basis of a radical gulf between the essential natures of human and nonhuman beings, we now have domination rationalized on the basis of a shared embeddedness in the life cycles of the natural world.² Talk of mutual dependence, predation, and ecological balance is everywhere, whether in the writings of certain philosophers, hunters, or farmers, or in the teachings of popular food gurus, while “the circle of

life" is the new mantra. "Life feeds on life." "For something to live, something else must die." "Live fully by embracing your role in the circle of life!"

How fortunate for us that we are the top predators in this brave new ecological order of eat and be eaten. Our technological ingenuity—not to mention our ingenuity at rationalizing our self-serving behavior—ensures that we are never asked to pay the price that other species must pay. At most, we will become food for worms after we die, but while we live, we can remain masters and possessors of nature so long as we respect the injunction not to undermine the material basis of our own rule. Factory farms must go, but our exploitation and consumption of animals is commendable when carried out sustainably and "respectfully."

Calls to reduce meat consumption, to buy only "humane meat" or locally produced meat, or to "harvest" wild animals sustainably may serve environmental goals (though food miles typically are more or less irrelevant to carbon footprints), but they do nothing to challenge human domination of nonhuman creatures. On the contrary, they substitute a new logic of domination, this one cloaked in ecological language—often with spiritual overtones—that helps salve moral qualms.

As Eileen Crist writes, we have much to learn from Indigenous cultures about how to approach the natural world with respect. But some environmental advocates forget that ethical practices have a socio-historical context and that Indigenous ways cannot be plucked out of context and applied to all issues facing the wider contemporary society. That we owe justice to our nonhuman sentient co-inhabitants of the planet is an emergent reality of global civilization. A reorientation of our relationships with animals may constructively be inspired by Indigenous views but must also embody new ways of thinking appropriate to new circumstances.³

Reordering civilization at all levels to recognize ecological constraints is vital. Nevertheless, it is salutary to recall that demands to heed ecological imperatives can have a dark side. The very word "ecology" was coined by Ernst Haeckel, a prominent nineteenth-century zoologist and Social Darwinist whose nationalist writings played a role in the rise of the German extreme right. From Nazis to neo-Nazis, demands to return to nature and submit to its laws are common. Here nature is viewed as an arena of perpetual struggle for survival in which the strong subdue the weak.

One does not have to accuse modern circle-of-life advocates of being “ecofascists” to recognize that calls for environmental responsibility can be part of a worldview that condones, and even celebrates, hierarchy and exploitation.

Rejection of the present industrial/extractivist paradigm in favor of a new ecological worldview still confronts us with the profound choice between continued exploitation of our fellow creatures in a green guise and a genuine recognition of their right to flourish as individuals. The exploitation of animals is so deeply rooted in most human society and culture that we must guard against the temptation to indoctrinate ourselves with a comforting new ideology of domination.

Endnotes

1. See George Monbiot, “There’s One Big Subject Our Leaders at Cop27 Won’t Touch: Livestock Farming,” *The Guardian*, November 9, 2022. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/09/leaders-cop27-livestock-farming-carbon-budget-governments
2. See Angus Taylor, “Electric Sheep and the New Argument from Nature” in *Animal Subjects: An Ethical Reader in a Posthuman World*, ed. Jodey Castri (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008).
3. For a nuanced examination of the harmonies and tensions between animal rights and Indigenous practices, see Will Kymlicka and Sue Donaldson, “Animal Rights and Aboriginal Rights” in Peter Sankoff, Vaughan Black, and Katie Sykes, eds., *Canadian Perspectives on Animals and the Law* (Toronto: Irwin Law, 2015).

About the Author



Angus Taylor taught philosophy for many years at the University of Victoria in British Columbia. He is the author of *Animals and Ethics: An Overview of the Philosophical Debate*. He helps run the website BEST Futures, which works to support the emergence of a sustainable and just world through providing people and communities with new tools, perspectives, and knowledge.



Panel 2: Action



You've Got to Be Carefully Taught

Nandita Bajaj

This was yet another piercingly honest exposé of our human supremacist worldview by Dr. Crist. As Crist points out, human supremacy exists as a background assumption that gives us permission to use, abuse, torture, and kill animals for food, clothing, entertainment, experimentation, and so much more, as we deem fit.

Here I take you through a brief journey into our educational system, one with which I am most familiar, having taught high school for a decade. Our socialization on ways in which to interact with animals often begins in early childhood education. Programs such as hatching classroom projects are very popular in elementary schools because they take advantage of the natural sense of curiosity that children have about living beings, in order to teach them about their biology, life cycles, and habitats. For these programs to run, fertile chicken eggs are taken away from their mothers through commercial hatcheries and sold to schools. Young children are then given complete ownership of these eggs. They are responsible for managing the incubation, brooding, and hatching of the eggs, and literally watch the birth of a baby chick occur under their full authority. “Accidents” in the form of egg breakage, failure to hatch due to improper procedures, or injury or death of the baby chicks due to mishandling are considered a natural part of the student’s learning experience, marginalizing any true feelings of guilt or sadness that may arise from causing such harm to another being. And once the “experiment” is over, the surviving chicks are sent back to the hatcheries to be culled, often through asphyxiation, or by being ground up in a meat grinder. And thereby begins the acculturation process that teaches students that they literally have full control over the life and death of another being—the start of the cultivation of a human supremacist worldview.

This is, of course, one of the many messages students receive within the educational institution

about their superior human nature. From the slaughtered animal foods served in the cafeterias, to the experimentation on live bugs, to the dissection of frogs, rats, fetal pigs, rabbits, cats, and baby sharks, to visits to zoos and aquariums to watch majestic wild animals living in life-long captivity—our schools are one of the first and most dominant institutions where young people learn that animals are ours to eat, experiment on, wear, use for entertainment, and abuse in any way we deem fit.

Crist also shines a light on the inconsistency in the way we treat different animals, including our treatment of companion animals, such as dogs and cats, and certain wild animals, such as pandas and dolphins, when compared with that of farmed animals or animals used for experimentation. This phenomenon, known as speciesism, is defined not only by the belief that all nonhuman animals are inferior to human beings, but also that some nonhuman animals are more worthy of our moral consideration compared to others, based on arbitrary and contradictory standards.

Through practices such as hatching projects described above, children are indoctrinated into becoming “hardened” in their emotional and behavioral attitudes towards certain other species. Sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild found that contrary to the popular belief that our emotions are truly personal, unique, and formed within a pristine vacuum, they are rather just as much a product of our socialization—what she calls “feeling rules”—as our actions.¹ We are taught acceptable responses to situations, such as when, how to, and towards whom to express feelings of joy, sadness, remorse, anger, or empathy. In this way, children grow up with a set of emotional and behavioral rules and standards that often contradict each other and constitute “moral double standards,” as found by a recent study from the universities of Exeter and Oxford. Speciesism is learned during adolescence, and children generally expressed greater degrees of moral concern and empathy towards nonhuman animals, including across species, than adults did.²

Psychologist Melanie Joy explains in her book *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows* that these moral acrobatics distort our capacity for empathy and make us act against our values.³ Most people would never willingly engage in or support the kind of extreme acts of violence that take place in a factory farm—appropriately deemed as one of the worse crimes in history by Yuval Noah Harari—such as force-feeding, tail docking, teeth clipping, dehorning, castration, debeaking,

maceration, separation of families, and ultimately slaughter.⁴ Yet, the systems are created in a way that leads caring rational people to act in irrational ways. Otherwise, how can we explain, Melanie Joy asks, why we have been socialized to find a hamburger appetizing but not a burger made out of a golden retriever?

And these ethical double standards don't just end with the human and nonhuman animal divide. Crist explained in her essay that the powers of oppression that derive benefit from the domination of animals do so equally with the exploitation of marginalized human communities. These divisions pervade our institutions, our language, our behaviors, and our consciousness in the form of structural ableism, racism, sexism, and classism, to name just a few. In fact, the most derogatory way to address a person is to call them an animal, or to treat them like an animal. Multiple layers of supremacy are embedded within such an expression that collectively seek to reduce both the person in question and the nonhuman animal into despicable objects that deserve not just our contempt, but violence, and even death, if necessary.

Recognizing the interlinkages between these systems of oppression is an important step towards realizing that liberating marginalized human communities and liberating nonhuman animal communities are complementary goals. Powerful scholars and activists, such as Sunaura Taylor, author of *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation*, and Aph Ko and Syl Ko, authors of *Aphro-ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters*, are laying the groundwork for us to begin engaging in these radically transformative discussions and actions.⁵ Courageously and humbly reckoning with our own complicity in these systems of privilege, power, and oppression paves a way forward for us to sincerely bring these conversations into the mainstream. Shifting public opinion is an essential step toward radically transforming these interlocked systems of oppression. By understanding that the worldview of supremacy is a product of learned emotions, language, attitudes, and behaviors that begin in childhood, we have the ability and tools to retrain these capacities to embody a new worldview— from one that seeks to control, compete, and destroy to one that seeks to cooperate, respect, heal, and restore. And our educational institutions would be an obvious place to begin those conversations.

Endnotes

1. Arlie Russell Hochschild, "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure," *American Journal of Sociology* 85 (November 1979): 551-575, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2778583>.
2. Luke McGuire, Sally Palmer, and Nadira Faber, "The Development of Speciesism: Age-Related Differences in the Moral View of Animals," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* (2022), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/19485506221086182/>.
3. Melanie Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* (Newburyport, MA: Conari Press, 2009). For more on this book, see <https://carnism.org/book/why-we-love-dogs-eat-pigs-and-wear-cows/>.
4. Yuval Noah Harari, "Industrial Farming Is One of the Worst Crimes in History," *The Guardian*, September 15, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/sep/25/industrial-farming-one-worst-crimes-history-ethical-question>.
5. Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (New York: The New Press, 2017); Aph Ko and Syl Ko, *Aphro-ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters* (Woodstock, NY: Lantern Publishing, 2017).

About the Author



Nandita Bajaj is the executive director of Population Balance, where she also co-hosts The Overpopulation Podcast. In addition, she is an adjunct instructor with the Institute for Humane Education at Antioch University, where she teaches about pronatalism, human supremacy, and ecological overshoot from a framework of justice and sustainability. She has BS in Aerospace Engineering and Education, and an MA in Humane Education, and she worked in these fields for fifteen years.



Stopping the Bulldozers

Guy Dauncey

Eileen Crist's essay opens the door to a discussion so important and yet so multi-faceted that it easily confuses the mind. When I remove the empathy-shutters that enable me to go about my daily life, my mind seeks to find order in the unbelievable scale of suffering that we inflict on the animal realm.

The scale of the apocalypse can be captured in two appalling data sets. The first tells us that since 1950 we have taken 90% of the large fish from the ocean—the sharks, tuna, swordfish, marlin, groupers, and cod. The second tells us that since 1970 we have wiped out 68% of the populations of the world's mammals, birds, fish, and reptiles. Behind each loss was a living being, a set of eyes, a will to live.¹

We are the apex predator. Across the planet, I picture five huge metaphorical bulldozers dragging mile-wide nets through nature, grabbing or killing every living being they want, and discarding the rest.

The first bulldozer is private capital, determined to maximize its return. Of the \$247 trillion currently invested around the world, only 13% is screened for socially responsible criteria, impacted by corporate ESG commitments, or loosely shaped by shareholder actions.² 87% is still chasing selfish returns, including investments that finance ecological collapse and climate disaster. Most of the finance behind illegal fishing and tropical rainforest destruction is being channeled through tax havens.³ Every project that harms or kills animals is being financed by someone, including pension funds. Without the money, none of it would happen.

The second bulldozer is the big agricultural, forestry, and fisheries corporations—and the big media corporations that give so little space to the deaths and losses, yet invent so much

space for outrage when an animal rights activist does something provocative. Take the global food company Cargill, based in Minnetonka, Minnesota. It is destroying the Amazon, the Grand Chaco, and the Cerrado ecosystems to clear space for soy and beef production in Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Bolivia. In Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana, it buys coca grown illegally in protected areas and parks. In Indonesia and Malaysia, it buys palm oil from illegally cleared rainforests. Its sells to McDonald's, Burger King, Walmart, and Unilever.⁴

The third bulldozer is the brute power of modern technology, from the feller-buncher machines that clearcut entire forests to the bottom trawlers that clearcut the ocean floor. Tools and machinery, in their functioning, often appear have a soul of their own which takes over their operators, saying, "I was designed to do this—let's do it!" Nature doesn't stand a chance.

The fourth bulldozer is our own pride and selfishness. The selfishness makes us choose not to think about the cruelty that happens on the farm to bring us meat, in the ocean to bring us fish, and in rainforests destroyed to create palm oil plantations to give us lipstick, shampoo, and instant noodles. Our pride makes us boast about the big fish we caught, the animals we hunted for the satisfaction of killing, the wetlands we drained to build new housing.

The final bulldozer is simple ignorance. Most people do not know what goes on to bring us the comforts we enjoy—the animal experimentation that lurks behind cosmetics, the long-line fishing that kills turtles and albatross, the farm pesticides that kill so many insects, including bees.

What is our response to these five bulldozers of the animal apocalypse? Collectively, those who care have erected four barriers. None of it is enough, but it is a huge effort. The first is education, inspiration, and political action, led by champions such as Jane Goodall, David Attenborough, Jacques Cousteau, Sangita Ayer, and the members of thousands of nonprofits who care about nature, habitat loss, and animal suffering and work to inspire people with love for nature, to make us aware of the losses, and to win legislation to protect the world's animals.

The second barrier is agitation and occupation, led by champions like Paul Watson and Sea Shepherd's fleet of ships out on the ocean working to stop illegal fishing in coastal waters from Africa to East Timor, and to protect turtles, dolphins, and whales. It includes the Greenpeace

champions who are dropping boulders into the North Sea and English Channel to stop the bottom trawlers, and the animal rights champions who run exposés and investigations into animal abuse in laboratories, farms and slaughterhouses, the clothing industry, tourist activities, and the pet trade, seeking legislative protection.⁵

The third barrier is the purchase and stewardship of land for permanent protection, led by Indigenous people around the world who are protecting some 20–30% of the Earth's land while still living in it; by groups such as the Conservation Alliance whose business members have helped to protect 73 million acres of land; by governments that create parks and marine protected areas; and by landowners who place conservation covenants on their land.⁶

The final and most lasting barrier is legislation, which has the capacity to end the animal apocalypse through laws and regulations. The Global Animal Law Association tracks which nations are doing what, ranging from those in East Asia, the Middle East, and Africa that have no animal welfare legislation at all, to those that have passed strong legislation and recognized the sentience and rights of animals. Two hundred years ago, most workers had no rights or legal protection. Thanks to determined campaigning, many workers now have those rights. Today, most animals have no protection. Will it take two hundred years to achieve the same for them? We need to bend the arc of the moral justice towards justice for animals, as well as for humans.

The movement for animal care and protection is broad and diverse, but it is also scattered. It focuses on certain species, because this generates a better human response. It is weak when it comes to screening investments, or pressing governments for broad rafts of legislation that would protect animals everywhere. It has yet to build coalitions of support with the climate movement, the women's movement, the LGBTQ+ movement, and the social justice movement.

When two researchers analyzed support for animal rights and welfare in America, they found that political conservatives and more religious people were less likely to support animal rights, that women were much more likely than men to support them, and that support for progressive issues was strongly associated with positive views about animal rights.⁷ This is encouraging, for it indicates that the ground is fertile for an effort to connect the different movements, bringing more strength to them all.

In the meantime, what can we do as individuals? We can eat a far more plant-based diet, we can switch any investments we might have to animal-friendly funds, and we can write to our political leaders urging support for big moves such as including ecocide in the legal code (as Belgium is close to doing) and protecting of 30% of the land and ocean by 2030, as the UN Conference on Biodiversity is asking. The animals have no voice in the halls of power. We must speak for them, to express their will to live.

Endnotes

1. Boris Worm et al., "Global Patterns of Predator Diversity in the Open Oceans," *Science* 309 (2005): 1365–1369, <https://www.science.org/doi/abs/10.1126/science.1113399>; Rosamunde Almond, Monique Grooten, and Tanya Petersen, eds., *Living Planet Report 2020: Bending the Curve of Biodiversity Loss* (Gland, Switzerland: World Wildlife Fund, 2020), https://www.wwf.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/LPR20_Full_report.pdf.
2. Global Sustainable Investment Alliance, *2018 Global Sustainable Investment Review* (Washington, DC: Global Sustainable Investment Alliance, 2019), http://www.gsi-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/GSIR_Review2018.3.28.pdf.
3. Victor Galanz et al., "Tax Havens and Global Environmental Degradation," *Nature Ecology & Evolution* 2 (September 2018): 1352–1357, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41559-018-0497-3>.
4. David Yaffe-Bellany, "From Environmental Leader to 'Worst Company in the World,'" *New York Times*, July 29, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/29/business/brazil-deforestation-cargill.html>.
5. Kate Helmore, "The Escalating Fight against Animal Agriculture," *The Tyee*, December 13, 2022, <https://thetyee.ca/News/2022/12/13/Excelsior-Case-Animal-Welfare/>.
6. Benji Jones, "Indigenous People Are the World's Biggest Conservationists, But They Rarely Get Credit for It," *Vox*, June 11, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/22518592/indigenous-people-conserve-nature-icca>.
7. Yon Soo Park and Benjamin Valentino, "Who Supports Animal Rights? Here's What We Found," *Washington Post*, July 26, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/07/26/who-supports-animal-rights-heres-what-we-found/>.

About the Author



Guy Dauncey is an author and ecofuturist working to develop a positive vision of a sustainable future, and to translate that vision into action. He is the founder of the British Columbia Sustainable Energy Association and the author or co-author of ten books, including *The Climate Challenge: 101 Solutions to Global Warming* and *Journey to the Future: A Better World Is Possible*. He is an Honorary Member of the Planning Institute of British Columbia, a Fellow of the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, and a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.



Beware Utopian Traps

Richard Falk

As I reflected on Eileen Crist's brilliant essay, I was struck by my own failures to live up to its ethical underpinnings. On two occasions, out of love and respect for animals, as well as the well-documented hazard of exerting pressure on ecological limits, I tried to give up meat-eating and limit my consumptive habits to plant-based food. Both experiments of living more in accord with my ethical and ecological beliefs exposed the tensions associated with finding a path between living together with others in extant modern societies and walking on paths more in accord with my values and hopes for the future.

I returned to meat-eating the first time after forgetting to inform dinner hosts about my vegetarian turn. When I arrived at their home, I realized that, at the very least I would be spoiling their dinner plans by forgoing what was being served, possibly even tarnishing our friendship. With this single slip, I lost the will to give up meat and fish, which I had throughout my life consumed without guilt, with pleasure. The pleasure of this mainstream diet returned, but now tinged with guilt—"after such knowledge there is no forgiveness." I soothed these feelings with the superficial consoling thought that I was not meant to take on every ecological and ethical challenge, and would lose focus on what I could best do if I spread my transformist zeal too broadly.

My second fall from grace was more dramatic. I was very proud that I had once more become a vegetarian, and kept the discipline for a year or so, only to discover that my all-too-human temperament succumbed to social pressure. I was in Jordan leading a UN mission. A Palestinian family living in Amman invited me for a meal. When I entered their home, I realized that they had prepared a feast in my honor, apparently in gratitude for this UN initiative to learn the grievances of the large Palestinian refugee communities living in Jordan. As guests gathered to sit on the floor in a circle surrounding a large pot of roasted goose, an utmost expression of

traditional hospitality, I lacked the will and composure to stick by my dietary commitment. And like a recovering alcoholic who dares to take a social drink, I lost confidence in living my way in a social milieu that was overwhelmingly at ease with eating habits that were inevitably abusive in their treatment of animals raised as food in the modern way. Even if this goose was less cruelly treated while alive, it was not the case with livestock in general, including poultry. As an ardent believer in GTI, was I also bound as an individual to make essential futuristic lifestyle changes now? Surely, I was free to make some changes, but was I bound to this, or suffer the indignity of being a hypocrite?

I give this weight to my personal experience because I think it touches upon widespread dilemmas of effectively engaging the GTI in a variety of existential circumstances. I often asked myself if this deference to societal tradition indicated weakness of will or a reluctance to challenge social convention for fear of rejection. I acknowledge a degree of culpability. At the same time, some necessary transformative initiatives at the level of individual behavior pose difficult choices. Giving up smoking or heavy drinking is situated in a socially acceptable comfort zone, while being a guest of those who have worked hard to produce a satisfying social occasion, whether with friends or strangers, poses a dilemma. Perhaps the dilemma will be overcome, or at least mitigated, by inter-generational shifts in values, habits, concerns. Those coming of age in the future will be increasingly faced with the dire consequences of the unmet challenges of modernity, and their adoption of new priorities will alter notions of hospitality, friendship, and right-living. What now seems a matter of choice and commitment at the margins of social life becomes closer to being an obligation of the entire community.

I think of Greta Thunberg, who as a teenager displayed greater wisdom and a clearer voice about living in harmony with nature than the elites currently running the world. With the candor of innocence, she told a gathering of UN diplomats that they would die of old age while she would die from climate change. Her words prefigured an ethical and transformational imperative. Yet her dramatized concerns were pragmatic as well as a matter of intergenerational grievance. The ecological foundation of what made Thunberg such an extraordinary prodigy among activists reflected growing apprehensions about the failures of government and the UN to address adequately threats posed by climate change. The official rhetoric stressing the urgency of

response did not generate the will to act effectively through the commitment of resources and collective initiatives of sufficient magnitude.

Putting my view of relations with animals in the present historical context, I favor what would seem a controversial position in the GTI community: a modest approach that defers the fundamental challenges set forth in the intellectually challenging, yet politically regressive Crist assessments. I believe it is politically regressive because it distracts attention from severe systemic biodiversity and global warming threats that will foreclose both human and animal futures if not addressed in the immediate future with requisite attention, which includes resources, equitable distribution of adjustment burdens, obligatory regulatory standards that are implemented. In effect, for individuals to take on the exploitative hierarchy between humans and animals at this time is dangerously diversionary for those who are dedicated to safeguarding the ecological prospects of most species, including the human. Although there are variations depending on context, I would make the same argument for those proposing the abolition of war, rather than limiting themselves to the abolition of nuclear weapons and killer drones, or for those insisting on equality in relation to wealth within and between states, rather than the insistence on equity.

In other words, in my view the GTI framework must endeavor to combine pragmatism with its future imaginary, or it will fall into the typical utopian trap of projecting a desired future without worrying too much about getting there, what some skeptics have called “the transition problem.” Returning to the theme of relations to animals we can and should address the cruelty presently embedded in our agro-industrial practices, not only to protect animals, but to ensure that the most vulnerable and marginalized humans are not victimized in the course of trying to improve the material conditions of the rich and powerful. We need to remember, as Stuart Rees reminds us in his pathbreaking book *Cruelty or Humanity* (2020), that cruelty underpins current political, economic, social, and cultural structures and is an embedded side-effect of standard capitalist operations not only in relation to food, but for all basic dimensions of modernity, including energy, militarized security, consumerism, and social protection. In this sense, educational reform giving positive emphasis to pre-modern and native peoples relations with animals and worldview would bring into the world new generations of more eco-sensitive youth, finally overcoming the techno-scientific hubris of claiming progress, while being blinded to cumulative regressive

features of human hierarchy, hegemony, geopolitics, exploitation, and limitless growth.

Matters of diet and individual lifestyle should be left to personal choice, eco-sensitive education, and circumstances, and not posited as mandatory norms during the transition process. In effect, priorities need to be established at all levels of social interaction, but especially within state-centric frameworks. If we try to do too much, we will tragically end BY doing too little!

About the Author



Richard Falk is Albert G. Milbank Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University, Fellow of the Orfalea Center of Global Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Associate Fellow at Tellus Institute. He directs the project on Global Climate Change, Human Security, and Democracy at UCSB and formerly served as director of the North American group of the World Order Models Project and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Occupied Palestine. He is the author of such books as *Power Shift: On the New Global Order*; *(Re)Imagining Humane Global Governance*; *Religion and Humane Global Governance*; and *Explorations at the Edge of Time*. He holds an SJD from Harvard University.



How to Act Locally

Gwendolyn Hallsmith

Some of my earliest memories were of the animals in my life; the deep contradiction of love and violence that Eileen Crist describes made me remember my childhood outrage at the way animals are treated. I think we are born with an innate sense of relationship; it has to be “educated” out of us to accept and participate in the current industrial food system. Rationalizations like the differential imperative enforce the hierarchical control over everything imposed by the wealthy and powerful men who have dominated economics, governance, and social systems for thousands of years.

Systems, in turn, are driven by human needs. While governance has a hand on the steering wheel, the power, the key driver, comes from the legitimate needs we all have. We need water, so large and complex water systems have sprung up. We need conflict resolution, so there are courts and assemblies. We need love, so we have networks of people who spend their time caring for others. We need food, so the industrially efficient exploitation of animals for food has grown exponentially, largely beyond the everyday view of the vast majority of people. It is a horror show, and as Crist correctly points out, it is destroying us and the planet.

There are things we can all do about it. One of my first jobs as an activist, forty years ago, was with Greenpeace. I sailed on the Rainbow Warrior to the Gulf of St. Lawrence to protect the baby harp seals. I was a deckhand. The Norwegians sailed across the Atlantic on big factory ships; they were killing the baby harp seals because their soft white fur was highly valued by the fur market in Europe. Greenpeace campaign staff sprayed the seals with a harmless green dye, to ruin the white coat and hopefully keep the seal alive. You don’t have to be a Darwinist to understand why killing all the babies is an existential threat to the species. Back then, Canada passed a law called the Seal Protection Act that prohibited anyone from being near the seals who didn’t want to kill them, so the sprayers were thrown in jail. The campaign was

successful: by targeting the Norwegians instead of the local subsistence hunters, we got people in Europe to join the protest, and the hunt was shut down.

If direct action campaigns to disrupt the senseless slaughter of animals are not your cup of tea, you could organize a Council of All Beings in your neighborhood, or city, or wherever it would work. Joanna Macy, Pat Fleming, and Arne Nass wrote one guidebook for doing that, called *Thinking Like a Mountain*. It helps people get in touch with the grief we feel for the extinction of all the species we have lost. Back in 2011, I organized a Council of All Beings in the Vermont State House because I felt the voices of all beings should have a legitimate place where decisions are made. People attended in costumes, representing animals and plants; I spoke for future generations. We passed legislation similar to what has worked in Ecuador and Costa Rica, where nature is given legal standing, legal rights, and all our rights to a healthy environment are affirmed. For some time after that, when climate legislation was being discussed, some of the Council members, like Polar Bear, showed up in the mask and sat in the gallery.

Our needs drive the larger systems, but those systems do not voluntarily offer us the choices we would like to have, especially if such choices involve increased costs and lower profits. We need to demand the change we want. We can do that by voting with our dollars. Stop buying industrial meat and other industrial food products. Support local farms, local food producers, and organic and regenerative food; eat as simply as you can. The food system represents more than 40% of the greenhouse emissions driving climate change. We need to change what we eat, and we need to do it as fast as we can. Start a dinner club with your friends in which you take turns cooking. Learn how to prepare whole foods. Shop the edge of the store, not the middle. Every changed habit helps.

Many cities and towns are working on biodiversity preservation by protecting wildlife corridors and creating new links where human occupation has blocked a route. Inventory local habitats and the natural communities that live there. Identify areas where sensitive species have food in the winter, for example, or a gathering place in the summer. Protect and expand them. Nature grows in lots of new places when conditions are right. “Bioblitzes” are community activities where over 48 hours, everyone works together to identify as many species as possible, recording them and

counting subsets and totals. You can even make bioblitzes into an annual festival, so that you develop a baseline of species and know when they are threatened.

I agree with Eileen Crist that we need to abolish CAFOs and protect wild animals in their natural habitats. If those goals are to be reached, the smaller, intermediate steps can move us in that direction. Further, expanding the lands that are returned to indigenous communities and Black people to make reparations for the legacy of colonization and slavery will also help animals and nature thrive. We've occupied Wall Street. What about Occupy Industrial Agriculture?

About the Author



Gwendolyn Hallsmith is founder and executive director of Global Community Initiatives. She is the author of six books on sustainable community development and has worked all over the world to foster local economies, good governance, and healthy ecosystems. She founded Vermonters for a New Economy to work on economic solutions at the state level, and the Headwaters Garden and Learning Center, an ecovillage in Cabot, VT. She has a master's degree in Public Policy from Brown University.



Back to the Farm Mindfully

Mike Jones

This most interesting discussion about solidarity with animals leads me to remember and reflect on experiences gathered during a life engaged in farming in England and managing wildlife in Africa.

Some History

As a child growing up on a small farm in England during the 1950 and 60s, I had a strong affinity with farm and wild animals. Protecting crops and livestock against predation was part of farm life. Foxes that raided the chicken house or killed newborn lambs led to calls for the local hunt to deal with the problem. Or father reaching for his flashlight and shotgun to enact revenge on the offender. But peering through the cover of bracken to watch a vixen playing with her cubs on an early summer evening was a source of delight and wonder.

At the age of 12, after reading about the rescue of large mammals from the rising waters of a lake created by damming the Zambezi River at Kariba Gorge in Zimbabwe, I decided that I was going to save wild animals in Africa. Ten years later, my first assignment as a new ranger to Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe was to learn how to shoot elephants that were breaking the boundary fence to raid the crops in the fields of neighboring farmers. Pumpkins, maize, bananas, beans, and watermelons are so much tastier than the dry leaves and twigs found in the park.

Having learned a little about how to kill elephants, my next assignment was to work on an extensive program of habitat restoration, the need for which arose from a long-term management aim to increase the numbers of charismatic large mammals for public enjoyment. The park's conservation objective of setting aside wild land for biodiversity conservation conflicted with the objective of creating opportunities for public recreation. The park had to be

seen to make a financial contribution to the national economy, and public support was necessary to legitimize the use of land for wild animal husbandry as opposed to agriculture or mineral extraction.

Unfortunately for all involved, Hwange is mostly dry for a large part of the year.¹ Except where movement was restricted by fences, large numbers of wildlife left the park every dry season as water supplies dwindled. To provide a wildlife spectacle for tourism, many artificial waterholes were created over a period of forty years so that water-dependent species stayed in the park throughout the year. This changed the entire ecology of the park, resulting not only in some animal populations reaching levels that could not be sustained by the available vegetation but also in extensive soil erosion.

Then the culling began to bring the ecosystem back into balance. Large numbers of animals were killed, some were translocated to other places. Nobody was interested in reducing the numbers of animals by slowly reducing the number of artificial waterholes. The animal-loving public and tourist industry protested the culling and provided considerable material support to keep the pumps running in the dry season when the government was short of money. The net outcome is that populations of some species (especially elephants) grew well beyond the point of any sensible population control measures. Habitat degradation and soil loss are increasing, and neighboring small holder farmers face severe livelihood challenges from crop and stock raiding wildlife. Attempts by animal welfare organization to reduce human-elephant conflict with chili pepper and beehives are of limited use.

Elephant numbers in Hwange are at the point where we can expect the kind of population collapse that occurred in Tsavo National Park.² Watching elephants die of starvation is most unpleasant, and there is no ethical way out of a dilemma born of the destructive relationship that exists between consumer age people and the rest of nature. Hwange's tourists and wildlife lovers are consuming wildlife and using technology to provide a year-round spectacle that attempts to match what they expect based what they have seen on the TV or at the cinema.

Use of wildlife increased throughout Zimbabwe from the mid-1970s as wildlife-based tourism was promoted as an alternative to livestock ranching. This policy arose out of necessity imposed by the

common law of Zimbabwe that has precedence over statutory laws that regulate land use. Under common law, a farmer was entitled to kill any animal that preyed on his livestock or crops. Large wild animals were doomed to extinction outside protected areas because of the conflict between them and people for access to land. Commodification provided a way to significantly increase the amount of land available for wild animals where land unsuited to crop production occurred outside protected areas. One leading conservationist described these wildlife production systems as “rural factories” where additional income is gained by providing tourism services that add financial value in ways that cannot be achieved with livestock ranching.

This short history illustrates how the policies and practices of wildlife management in Zimbabwe were aligned with the evolution of human development and its environmental impacts described by Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin in *The Human Planet and How we Created the Anthropocene*.³ The accumulation of financial capital and technology have worked together since the fourteenth century to enable the global trade, industrialization, and consumer capitalism that dominate world affairs today. The naïve visions of a 12-year-old boy could never be met while the existing structures that support capitalist exploitation of nature for financial gain exist. Somewhere along the path of our cognitive and cultural evolution from pre-agrarian to post-agrarian societies, humans of the modern world lost the ability to rein in greed and the accumulation of power.

Where Next?

The farm where I grew up has avoided the intensification of industrial agriculture by providing organic grass-fed beef for local markets, tourism and environmental education services, alternative energy production, various trial-and-error experiments in agro-forestry, and the reintroduction of beavers to enhance wildlife and reduce flooding of a neighboring village. These achievements were made against a policy background that favors industrial agriculture and a financial system that requires every expense to be considered in relation to the need to avoid insolvency and the loss of the land to the capitalist system. What is happening on the farm is a movement towards the GTI future of eco-communalism.

Thinking about the misstep in the cultural evolution of modern humans and the need to overcome the idea that humans are exceptional animals leads to consideration of the cosmologies of

indigenous people of North America who developed societies based on various forms of hunting, gathering, fishing, forestry, and agriculture. As Indigenous writers such as Robin Wall Kimmerer show in *Braiding Sweetgrass*, indigenous people have much to teach us about holistic thinking, the use of social controls to curtail greed, and how to live with the rest of nature.⁴ This verse from the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address is a suitable way of thinking about our relationship with other animals as sources of pleasure and nourishment to be used respectfully and responsibly:

We gather our minds together to send greetings and thanks to all the Animal life in the world. They have many things to teach us as people. We are honored by them when they give up their lives so we may use their bodies as food for our people. We see them near our homes and in the deep forests. We are glad they are still here and we hope that it will always be so.

Now our minds are one.

Endnotes

1. Gary Haynes, "Hwange National Park: The Forest with a Desert Heart," July 2021, www.researchgate.net/publication/353495822_HWANGE_NATIONAL_PARK_THE_FOREST_WITH_A_DESERT_HEART.
2. Ian Parker, "An Historical Note from Tsavo East National Park: Vegetation Changes over Time," *Pachyderm* 59 (2018): 109–113.
3. Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin, *The Human Planet: How We Created the Anthropocene* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).
4. Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013).

Endnotes

1. Gary Haynes, "Hwange National Park: The Forest with a Desert Heart," July 2021, www.researchgate.net/publication/353495822_HWANGE_NATIONAL_PARK_THE_FOREST_WITH_A_DESERT_HEART.
2. Ian Parker, "An Historical Note from Tsavo East National Park: Vegetation Changes over Time," *Pachyderm* 59 (2018): 109–113.
3. Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin, *The Human Planet: How We Created the Anthropocene* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018).
4. Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2013).

About the Author



Mike Jones teaches systems thinking for sustainable development at the Swedish University of Agriculture Sciences and promotes the application of systems thinking in IUCN's Commission on Ecosystem Management. He spent almost fifty years as a conservation and development practitioner, mostly in eastern and southern Africa with occasional forays to the United States of America, including developing networks of forward-thinking practitioners with the Stockholm Resilience Centre.



Taking Ethics to the Decision-Makers

Fred Koontz

Eileen Crist's hard-hitting essay argues effectively that *solidarity with animals* is a key moral and strategic direction for a Great Transition, noting that animal liberation could end much animal suffering and help restore Earth's ecosystems. Crist proposes abolishing confined animal feeding operations, adopting a mostly plant-based diet, and protecting wild animals in nature. Sound ideas, but is her vision too blue-sky for our morally cloudy world?

Crist's concept of a new solidarity with animals eludes us because of humans' predominantly anthropocentric worldviews and the consequent management of animals as resources to use rather than as sentient beings with intrinsic value. I hope a future post-anthropocentric civilization emerges that recognizes animals are sentient and social beings, have intrinsic value, and should always be treated with respect. Such changes will require a robust debate over what constitutes multispecies justice and the ethical boundaries of human-animal interaction.

One example of where this debate has been playing out is in the reform of state fish and wildlife departments (DFWs) in the US. Popularly known as "Fish and Game," these government agencies and their oversight commissions use an anthropocentric and utilitarian justification for killing wild animals. This is reflected throughout their practices, laws, and agency culture. The fifty state DFWs collectively spend \$5.6 billion annually to manage 450 million acres of land and employ 50,000 staff.¹ If only by virtue of their resources, DFWs should serve an important role in protecting the nation's wildlife. However, they have been increasingly criticized over their purpose: Should these government agencies stick to their traditional mission of animal trapping, hunting, and fishing, or should they focus on biodiversity conservation and animal well-being?

State Fish & Wildlife Departments: Stuck in an Ethical and Political Quagmire

The debate over DFWs' purpose is fueled by a recognition that biodiversity loss is insufficiently addressed by DFWs, and research that shows that as the United States modernizes, there is a shift from domination values to mutualism values.² Domination values are consistent with DFWs' anthropocentric and utilitarian philosophy of treating animals as resources. Mutualism values reflect a belief that humans and animals ought to co-exist in harmony, that animals deserve some kind of moral or political rights, and that our abuse of them as mere resources should stop.

I witnessed arguments over DFWs' purpose when serving on the Washington State Fish & Wildlife Commission in 2021. Recent controversies included increasing cougar hunting, setting rules for lethal removal of endangered wolves, and stopping spring bear hunting. Conflicts often appear at first glance to be between preservation and harvest, but at a deeper level reflect differences in public values that spark disputes in decision-making about human-wildlife interaction.³

In recent years, the Commission and the department it oversees have been caught in an ethical and political quagmire, stuck between the Department's status quo priority of consumptive use of animals and adopting a paradigm shift emphasizing biodiversity conservation and animal well-being. Below I offer two observations from my Commission experience to provide some insight for turning wildlife agencies toward more just treatment of animals.

The Human-Animal Divide Runs Deep

The cornerstone of Washington's animal trapping, hunting, and fishing rests on the human-animal divide, John Rodman's "differential imperative." Humans rule from the top, animals obey from the bottom. Fortified by anthropocentric state and federal laws, the Commission and Department hold life and death decisions over the state's wild animals, restricted only by requirements to sustain game, protect public safety, and recover endangered species.

Critics fall into two camps in regard to the human-animal divide: (1) conservationists that promote biodiversity values from a human-benefits perspective (e.g., ecosystem services) that essentially are consistent with a distinct divide and (2) proponents of animal well-being that see the human-animal boundary as porous. What separates these two camps is that conservationists promoting

biodiversity and ecosystem services typically leave individual animals and their well-being out of the discussion. This difference is important to build a praxis that moves wildlife agencies toward greater solidarity with animals.

Wildlife agencies' reliance on the human-animal divide could be blunted if conservationists at public meetings emphasized the intrinsic value of animals and minimized differences between humans and other species. Additionally, while the proponents of animal well-being often are concerned about biodiversity, their testimony usually focuses on individual animals (e.g., bear cubs orphaned from killing mother bears). This approach is given much less weight by agency decision-makers than arguments championing species and ecosystems, and this prejudice hinders well-being proponents from trying to build coalitions with those concerned with conserving biodiversity for human benefit.

Science and Values: Fear in the Hunter's Camp

Since Aldo Leopold's influential book *Wildlife Management*, DFWs have claimed the supremacy of science.⁴ One consequence is that many wildlife directors and commissioners fear "objective versus subjective" chaos will result if commissions stray from science-informed facts.⁵ While all agree that advancing public interests require a foundation in facts, treating truth-from-science as the sole arbiter for making wildlife decisions is misdirected. Science alone cannot tell us what to do. Policy is informed by facts but ultimately is driven by values. Good decision-making deliberatively weaves facts, ethics, and social norms together into just public policy and laws.

Wildlife managers make decisions with limited facts because our science is incomplete. As a result, DFWs and commissions typically ask experts, usually agency employees, to judge what scientific evidence suggests for particular issues. Identifying the best science and considering it impartially is difficult and with poor methods can be open to bias and subjective interpretation. Often the objectivity of agency experts is questioned by opponents who defend different interpretations of the available data. Agency experts counter with charges of "advocacy bias." Because people typically view scientists as either completely objective or completely unobjective, back-and-forth accusations of bias can cause mistrust of the wildlife agency, scientists, and

science itself. Unfortunately, all sides typically fail to consider that objectivity is a continuum, and that it can improve with practice and unbiased discussions.⁶

Among wildlife personnel and commissioners, values are typically considered subjective and are thereby discounted in decision-making. Paradoxically, Leopold, who founded science-based wildlife management, also said that ethics is a key to preserving nature.⁷ Many commissioners, agency game managers, and hunters presume a fact/value dichotomy. They fear that incorporating values into the decision-making process, especially ideas about how we ought to treat individual animals, will lead to a slippery slope eliminating hunting. This worry makes it difficult to reach compromise. Ironically, much of this fear rests on animal values informed by science in recent decades by means of ethology, ecology, and evolutionary science. This new knowledge makes the well-being of individual animals an ethical beacon in our human-animal relationship. Yet, moral consideration of individual animals can run counter to killing them for recreation; maybe hunters' slippery slope fear is justified!

“What Then Must We Do?”

Luke the Evangelist, Leo Tolstoy, and Billy Kwan urged us to directly confront misery because thinking about major issues is not enough. Eileen Crist calls out the immense violence against animals and reminds us that this violence is widely institutionalized, protected by undemocratic power structures, and largely hidden from an uninformed public. However, there are cracks of light in the darkness of animal injustice.

Wildlife agency reform is just one example that opens a much-needed public discussion on the human-animal relationship. As a Wildlife Commissioner, I found the largest barrier to these discussions was the limited understanding among the public, agency staff, and decision-makers of concepts of science objectivity, ethics, and the role of science and values in policy making. Consequently, I came to believe that animal-related public debates are a key to a Great Transition because they allow ethicists to highlight deeper philosophical issues driving Society's treatment of animals and nature. There are [many such opportunities](#) for ethicists to engage and find some blue sky for people, animals, and nature.

Endnotes

1. Larry Voyles et al., *The State Conservation Machine* (Washington, DC: Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and the Arizona Game and Fish Department, 2017), tinyurl.com/4k9wr4xc.
2. Wildlife for All, “Wildlife for All: A National Campaign to Reform State Wildlife Management to be More Democratic, Just, Compassionate, and Focused on Protecting Wild Species and Ecosystems,” 2022, accessed December 26, 2022, wildlifeforall.us; Michael Manfredo et al., *America’s Wildlife Values: The Social Context of Wildlife Management in the U.S.* (Washington, DC: Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies and the Arizona Game and Fish Department, 2018), www.fishwildlife.org/application/files/9915/4049/1625/AWV - National Final_Report.pdf.
3. Fred Koontz, “Refocus Fish & Wildlife Mandate on Conservation,” *The Seattle Times*, Opinion Page, April 7, 2022, tinyurl.com/6at922fn.
4. Aldo Leopold, *Game Management* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1933).
5. Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991).
6. Naomi Oreskes, *Why Trust Science?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).
7. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949).

About the Author



Fred Koontz is a Fellow at PAN Works, advisor at Wildlife for All, and board vice president at the Wildlands Network. A retired wildlife conservationist, he previously worked at the Wildlife Conservation Society, EcoHealth Alliance (formerly “Wildlife Trust”), and Woodland Park Zoo, and held adjunct faculty positions at Columbia University, New York University, and University of Washington. His current scholarly interests focus on reforming fish and wildlife agencies and crafting biodiversity conservation policy based on non-anthropocentric worldviews that interconnect science, values, and social norms. He has a PhD in zoology from the University of Maryland.



Toward Movement Synergy

Dayton Martindale

It is refreshing to see other environmentalists and anti-capitalists taking seriously the question of solidarity with other animals, and Eileen Crist did a great job of starting this conversation.

I have been vegan for ten years and active in the animal liberation movement, written extensively on animal issues, and interviewed several prominent animal ethicists and activists on my podcast. I agree wholeheartedly with Crist that there is no justification for human supremacy, and that human oppression of other animals wild and domestic represents an unfathomable moral atrocity.

What does this mean for a great transition? There is widespread agreement that humans (at least in most countries) will need to eat less meat and dairy, for environmental reasons if nothing else. And also that we should protect or preserve many wild species. But too often, concern for animal well-being is presented as a secondary justification for what we already have to do anyway, for humanity's own sake. I think genuine solidarity requires us to go further.

Crist presents a useful distinction between people's lifeworlds—in which many express genuine love and affection for other animals—and broader social systems, which enact tremendous violence. Clearly, it has not been enough to simply point out the contradiction between the two and expect people to align their personal habits more with their lifeworlds, or else vegetarianism would be much more widespread than it is.

I wonder, however, if more of that affection for animals could be channeled not only toward individual lifestyle change (though I think that is very important) but as part of a political movement to change systems. For instance, California voters have passed multiple ballot initiatives to prohibit egregiously tiny cages for farmed animals, by huge margins that show

some cross partisan appeal. (Of course, these initiatives have been challenged in courts.) In US polling, almost everyone says animals deserve at least some rights, and a slight majority even opposes animal testing.¹ Protecting endangered species polls better than climate action. People like animals, maybe not enough to eat less chicken, but perhaps enough to support politicians and policies that would make chicken rarer and more expensive. (Of course, I could be wrong, and any anti-meat measures would get a strong right-wing backlash, but ballot measures bear out some of my optimism.)

This means that fighting for animal liberation is not necessarily a distraction from other aspects of the great transition, but can be another rallying point to the cause. People who become vegetarians for environmental or health reasons are more likely to start eating meat again than the people become vegetarian primarily for animal-rights reasons: other-directed motivators can be stronger than more selfish ones. Analogously, a great transition movement that takes nonhuman animals seriously, rather than as an afterthought, might strengthen people's resolve to improve humanity's lot as well.² This, in a way, is what solidarity is all about.

But I would go further. Imagine a great transition that does only the bare minimum for animals: say, ending factory farms, reducing meat consumption, and increasing protected wildlife areas, but still leaves plenty of small-scale animal farms, vivisection, zoos, puppy mills, fur, leather, displacement of wildlife for industry and development, etc. This is not a great transition at all, or at least it is incomplete. After all, nonhuman beings represent the vast majority of sentient creatures on Earth. An anthropocentric great transition only substitutes one hierarchical, oppressive social system for another.

I encourage individuals to make whatever lifestyle changes they can to begin to embody this more just future in the present—eating vegan, eschewing zoos and Sea World, avoiding leather, etc. But again, the ultimate transformation will require rethinking animals' status in politics, policy, and law—in our systems. They must stop being considered property, and become something else. Possible starting points for what that looks like can be found in the work of philosophers like Will Kymlicka, Sue Donaldson, and most recently Martha C. Nussbaum in her new book *Justice for Animals*. Eva Meijer and others are exploring how we might build a “multispecies democracy.”³

I also think that just relations with other animals (as well as among humans) are ultimately impossible under capitalism. If profit is the primary economic driver, and there is money to be made from animals' bodies and/or homes, concerns about animal justice will be sidelined.

But might there be some ethical use of animals' bodies and/or homes in the postcapitalist society, even one with mutual respect between creatures (for instance a humane egg or wool industry)? I don't rule it out but am skeptical: I think that, without firm safeguards, it would be difficult to prevent backsliding to exploitation. But either way, I think that humane, respectful uses are likely incompatible with the buying and selling of meat.

Others have mentioned indigenous practices as a potential model for mutually respectful meat consumption. But I am not sure this model is a fair comparison to most of the world today, with a vastly increased population and year-round access to plant food that for most can reach nutritional needs. In the United States, outside of perhaps certain regions in Alaska or other remote areas, we would be eating meat not because we must but because we want to. Farming also removes the animal's choice in the matter. This strikes me as a different situation than that faced by indigenous groups who engage in subsistence hunting or fishing. At risk of coming across as too strident, for most Americans, claiming there is mutual respect in meat consumption is a flimsy excuse for unnecessary violence.

Endnotes

1. Taylor Orth, "Nearly Half of Americans Support Strengthening Laws around Animal Cruelty," YouGov America, May 31, 2022, <https://today.yougov.com/topics/society/articles-reports/2022/05/31/american-support-strengthening-laws-animal-cruelty>; Mark Strauss, "Americans Are Divided over the Use of Animals in Scientific Research," Pew Research Center, August 16, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/16/americans-are-divided-over-the-use-of-animals-in-scientific-research>.
2. Daton Martindale, "The Strategic Case for Animal Liberation," *The Trouble*, August 18, 2020, <https://www.the-trouble.com/content/2020/8/28/the-strategic-case-for-animal-liberation>.
3. Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Martha C. Nussbaum, *Justice for Animals: Our Collective Responsibility* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2022); Eva Meijer, *When Animals Speak: Toward an Interspecies Democracy* (New York: New York University Press, 2019). I interviewed Nussbaum on my podcast [here](#).

About the Author



Dayton Martindale is a journalist covering climate, ecology, and animals, and an editor-at-large for the rural news site *Barn Raiser*. He is the former associate editor of *In These Times* magazine, and has written for *Sierra*, *Boston Review*, *Truthout*, *The Trouble*, *Jacobin*, *The Next System Project*, *Earth Island Journal*, *The Ecologist*, and *Harbinger: A Journal of Social Ecology*, among others. He is also host of the environmental books podcast *Storytelling Animals*. He has a history of activism within left social movements, in particular those for climate justice and animal rights, and is a cofounder of the Democratic Socialists of America's Animal Liberation Working Group.



Entangled Liberation Struggles

David Nibert

The thoughtful and important essay by Eileen Crist highlights the global crises causally linked to the exploitation of other animals while laying bare the socially created ideology that continues to promote an oppressive world. The natural affinity humans have with other animals noted by Crist was profoundly overshadowed more than 10,000 years ago in Eurasia with the capture, confinement, and ruthless exploitation of other animals for material gain. The oppression of other animals as instruments of war, laborers, rations, and other resources both enabled and promoted widespread warfare and violence while leading to the development and transmission of deadly zoonotic disease. In particular, the necessary pursuit of grasslands and fresh water by militaristic nomadic pastoralists brought continual warfare, genocide, systems of enslavement, and the oppression of women. This violent transformation in human existence and the resulting entangled oppression of humans and other animals was buttressed by early forms of state power and legitimated through the creation of perverse ideologies that afflict the world to this day, including speciesism, racism, sexism, and classism—nefarious notions grounded in religious doctrine.

This violent and oppressive social system was exported to much of the rest of the world through European colonization. These genocidal invasions were driven in no small part by the continued acquisition of lands for ranching, and they were made possible by the ongoing oppression of other animals as instruments of war and by the deadly introduction of smallpox and related zoonotic diseases. The wealth created by such violence—including the rapacious slaughter of countless birds and water-dwelling beings, the deplorable trafficking in the skin and hair of beavers and similar other animals, and the horrific transatlantic trafficking in enslaved peoples who were sustained on the salted flesh of cows and pigs—led to the morphing of the long-established militaristic and violent command economies to a more

nuanced version of the same—capitalism. While capitalist elites ravished the world through colonization, the system also promoted appalling exploitation of the masses of people within capitalist nations.

Destructive wars among powerful capitalist nations that have plagued the planet in recent history have been supplemented by regional wars, deadly coups, assassinations, and related campaigns undertaken to smother movements for economic justice and democracy throughout the world. Much of the land stolen from indigenous people everywhere continues to be used in the production of goods derived from tens of billions of other animals whose diabolical treatment is linked—as discussed by Crist—to the most serious problems confronting the planet.

And like its previous manifestation, capitalism is driven by greed and is reliant on the violence inherent in elite control of state power. And speciesism, racism, sexism, classism, and related ideologies flourish under the capitalist system by continuing to justify oppression while also fostering social divisions that divert many from the true source of their deprivation, insecurity, and alienation. As Crist notes, the institutionalized systems of oppression of other animals are pervasive, and this oppression is deeply entangled with world hunger, vital resource depletion, desertification, pollution, chronic disease, deadly pandemics, and the climate crisis.

Further, under capitalism the human species's potential for love and connectedness is largely eclipsed by the struggle for daily subsistence. From the existence of staggering inequality, “right to work” states, and monumental levels of student debt in the United States—to the oppressive, deprivation-producing global arrangements dictated by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization—Genghis Khan would be impressed. Economic elites’ control of the state, the mass media, and educational institutions—coupled with their successful cooptation of key religious organizations—serves to keep the masses in more affluent countries “dazed and confused” and preoccupied with funding the basic needs of their families.

While the ideological impediments to change well-noted by Crist require continued examination and deconstruction, so, too, do challenges to the entangled oppression of humans and other animals require a widespread interrogation of the capitalist system. The enduring contributions of the work of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, and the numerous scholar-activists influenced

by their work, informs much transitional scholarship and activism today. Notably, while Critical Animal Studies scholar/activists work to challenge all forms of entangled oppression driven today by neoliberalism and avarice, most advocates for other animals largely challenge the ideological basis of oppression and promote tepid reforms while largely overlooking the historical political-economic basis of the horrors they denounce. As noted by Crist and numerous scholars and activists, all forms of oppression are deeply connected. No single form can be effectively addressed if others are allowed to continue. A movement for justice for other animals is self-defeating if the systemic and profitable promotion of their torment produced by capitalism escapes recognition and opposition.

And so long as the interests of other animals who inhabit the planet are marginalized and unwisely dismissed by the academy and progressives, the economic, political, and ideological basis of their oppression will continue to uphold patriarchy, ruthless exploitation of the world's human population, violence, warfare, and environmental destruction. Activists of all stripes everywhere must mount a united challenge against the destructive forces of capitalism and strive for the transition to a world system that promotes justice for all the inhabitants of the planet. That transition will require the reversal of all forms of oppression of other animals set in motion over 10,000 years ago—an essential requirement for the restoration of humans' natural kinship and respect for all and the creation of a just and sustainable world.

About the Author



David Nibert is Professor of Sociology at Wittenberg University, where he teaches courses on *Animals & Society* and *Global Injustice*. His books include *Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation* and *Animal Oppression and Human Violence: Domesecration, Capitalism and Global Conflict* and the editor of *Animal Oppression and Capitalism*, Volumes One and Two. He co-organized the section on Animals and Society of the American Sociological Association. He holds a PhD in sociology from Ohio State University.



Listening to the Forest

Suprabha Seshan

To start with a few words about myself, I am a conservationist serving the rainforests of the Western Ghats in India. It has been my lifelong inquiry to look at how a biome can recover from assault—from colonial-neocolonial-capitalistic-civilizational assault. I know, and the biome knows, that it can heal from most travesties and injuries, and that it will do its utmost to replenish itself and the planet. I have faith that this is true for humans and also the creatures portrayed in Eileen’s Crist’s essay.

My vocation and imperative is to protect endangered species, restore rainforest habitat, and educate youth. I am not alone. There are many women in this place. Together with the men who also live and work here, we have an intimate knowledge of the plants and animals who create this biome, who are all sovereign beings in their own right. Together we work on a collective ecology, acknowledging our inseparableness from each other in the web of life. We create cultures, biomes, and ecospheres. All these are being exterminated by the toxic forces of technologized-capitalistic patriarchy.

Without detracting from the horror of animal gulags, I urge us to remember that humans too are slaves to modern capital’s domination imperative. So, too, is the great planet with its winds and lands and waters and icy expanses and biodiverse biomes. So, too, are the forests of my region with their elephants, butterflies, orchids, ferns, and towering trees.

Modern capital needs us (creatures) alive, and it needs us dead for its conquest. It is a real question how liberation will come for anybody. With a violation imperative unique in the entire life of the cosmos, it needs enslaved trees, dead trees, living trees, and feral trees (ecosystem services of forests). It needs enslaved, dead, living, and feral water (for irrigation, tidal power, and hydropower). It needs enslaved, dead, living, and feral wind (for air-conditioning, ventilators

turbines, and climate control). It needs enslaved, dead, living, and feral plants and animals (for food and medicines and now for climate-saving biodiversity). It needs enslaved, dead, living, and feral viruses (for evolution and now for vaccines and the great global reset). It needs enslaved, dead, living, and feral humans (for research, trade, war, terrorism, and slavery). And like all the above, it needs an enslaved, dead, living, and feral planet too (for extra-terrestrial research and exploration of the moon, other planets, the solar system, the cosmos, and space).

The urgency to address the relation between the militarized-capitalist-supremacist mindset and the living body of the earth looms larger all the time. The latter includes you and me, our beloved human families, friends, communities, and peoples, and also our non-human kith and kin. Including, and especially, the animals exploited for supremacist projects, the subjects of Eileen Crist's essay.

On one side of a virtual line, to my west, a marvelous old growth forest billows mightily in the winter wind. There, wild animals run free. They are fecund, sinewy, and strong. Their lives interweave to make mind-boggling diversity. Along with plants and fungi, the microbes, winds and waters, they create the forest. When they cross over the virtual line, as they often do to the "human" side, they are driven back; they are perceived as destructive as they raid the territories of the settler peoples, the new landed gentry, and the corporatized plantations. Hunting is prohibited these days, so their numbers are on the rise. But so is the ire of humans whose dependence on the global market for selling cash crops (banana, coffee, pepper, avocado, rubber, tea, bitter gourd, pigs, cattle, chickens, labor, and gentrified views) pits them against the feral forces of the forest. Simultaneously, wild habitat is decreasing through fragmentation, fencing, and control. More animals in less forest is a kind of corralling. Drawdown and overshoot, or cross-border terrorism, are inevitable, it seems.

On the human-dominated side, animals live in pens, cages, or stalls. If outdoors, they are usually tethered. They are protected from predators, and fattened by imported feed, and subjected to antibiotics, vaccines, and artificial insemination. They are mostly destined for butchery. There is

little free grazing (but there are no large factory farms either). Feral dogs and cats live their feral lives: some are fed, others are left to scavenge, occasionally one falls to poisoning.

Not far from my dwelling, I can hear wild boars grunting at night, and when I walk past our borders, I can hear the snorts of penned pigs in nearby farms. The modern existential conundrum revolves around the question of freedom, one that especially rises in encounters with both wild and caged creatures. Elephants, bison, deer, otters, monkeys, jungle fowl, snakes in their assigned “wild” homes on the forest side, and cows, water buffalo, goats, chickens, dogs, and cats on the farm side, each making incursions to the other side. Being alive today is a negotiation of strange contradictory forces. Slaughter is allowed, but hunting is not. Wild boar can’t be killed by hunter gatherers with their bows and arrows, but tame pigs can be butchered by steel knives. Foraging from the forest is a punishable crime, while huge land areas can be converted to farms and resorts. Farmers can grow subsidized crops and tourists can be taken on wild foraging sprees for a price, while the free ones, who never have to pay for housing or food, are subject to land use regulations and global funding; the natural world is after all a land use category.

On the forest side, trees brimming with epiphytes soar as they have done for a hundred million years. *Their* ancient range lands have also been diminished by 90%. The word holocaust is appropriate for this degree of destruction. Meanwhile, on the other side, trees are not so tall; they are farmed, or co-opted, battered, suppressed, and sprayed with toxic chemicals for the sake of the world market. Torture, burning, and slavery of a botanical kind.

My adivasi friends (first peoples) can hear the thoughts of trees. They have a rich, storied narrative imbued with climbers, creepers, medicinal herbs, and different trees. They also have fantastic tales of animals. They have forested ballads that run for days. They worship stones. They live or act in solidarity with all beings. Well-being is of the whole, and suffering is of the whole. They show me that my own frames of referencing, and thus my politics, may add to the violence already borne by the living world. Over time, I make my mental boxes more porous. My ecology mirrors my learning. Animals and plants, and trees, rain, rivers, and rocks, all in wild interbeing, living in communion, as community.

It is extraordinary that my friends are denied free access to *their* previous range lands, the forest that has been their home for thousands of years, perhaps tens of thousands of years. They *are* the forest. Now many of them work as coolies in plantations, and they eat white rice from government distribution agencies, instead of wild caught creatures, and dozens of different forest plants. They, of course, are enslaved, though the economy likes to call it progress and development.

I, too, had a different relationship with the rest of the living world. I am now a full-fledged conservationist. I work more with lines, rules, policies, grants, papers, and ideas, with money trails subject to global deals, than the actual land. I engage more with abstractions than the free walking explorations I did as a young wildlifer when I first came here thirty years ago. The experience of being alive in the modern world is another way of saying slavery, or being complicit in enabling slavery.

I continue, however, to listen to the ecological thoughts of the forest. I know it can return, that it is trying all the time. I know that tigers and elephants can live peacefully with humans. I know that a generation ago, in this area, humans had a different relationship with their ancient forest home and other creatures living here. I know a different way of being is certainly possible, even if it is carried on the wings of memory.

The experience of being alive in a forest is community.

About the Author



Suprabha Seshan is a long-term custodian of the Gurukula Botanical Sanctuary in the Western Ghat mountains of India. She is primarily concerned with rainforest conservation and community-based ecological nurturance and facilitates immersive educational programs for “rewilding” humans. Her essays can be found in *The Indian Quarterly*, *Local Futures*, *The New Internationalist*, *The Journal of Krishnamurti Schools*, *Countercurrents.org*, and *The Economic and Political Weekly*. She is on the steering committee of the newly formed Ecological Restoration Alliance, India.



Author's Response



Response to Comments

Eileen Crist

I am grateful for the learning and insights that the commentators brought to this discussion. I take the approach of connecting the perspectives offered into a narrative that reflects strong common ground, disagreements notwithstanding.

We face multiple eco-social crises accelerated by multiple drivers. The ideological and material origins of our predicament, as David Barash, Gary Steiner, David Nibert, and Freya Mathews underscore, have a long history reaching back to the Neolithic. Fueling today's economic, demographic, technological, and socio-psychological drivers is the enduring legacy of a hierarchical zeitgeist instilled within institutions, language, and belief systems that are so longstanding as to have become taken for granted within Conventional Worlds.

This legacy has divorced humanity from a world of coexistence and reciprocity, a world that manifests the reality of oneness, meaning unity-in-diversity. Understanding hierarchy as the root cause of our dangerous situation, and restoring the guiding lights of universality in human life, are mandatory in order to foster human awakening and quicken the Great Transition.

Root Cause

The root cause of today's calamities is hierarchical systems of thought, seeing, and practice. While such systems have subjugated diverse entities—human, animal, plant, ecosystem—ultimately they are conjoined in the ways they play off, reinforce, and transport across one another. For example, hierarchy *as such* is steeled when non-Caucasians are compared to “animals,” native people are seen as “savage beasts,” women are regarded as akin to “lower nature,” children and animals are exploited just because they are powerless, trees are refused inherent standing because they are “non-sentient,” or fish are configured as “fisheries,” regarded as insensible to pain, and extracted by tonnage from their living places and relations.

Hierarchical systems crisscross terrains when black and brown people are forced to work the kill floors, meat processing assembly lines, and pesticide-ridden agricultural fields. When workers in the Global South labor in nature-polluting mines to deliver high-tech raw materials for the privileged. When nature-polluting facilities are situated in BIPOC neighborhoods of the underprivileged. When exploited humans staff the decks of commercial fishing vessels in conditions of modern-day slavery. When cruelty toward animals (as Angus Taylor points out) is regularly co-present with cruelty toward humans. Or when expendable men and women are sent to die in wars bent upon seizing nature-extraction opportunities—be they breadbaskets or oil fields.

Hierarchical systems push cheap industrial food, made from the torture of animals and the ravaging of ecosystems, on people across global society. Consequently, those at the bottom of the human hierarchy are disproportionately afflicted by chronic “diseases of affluence” (actually, diseases of the poor) and are thus far more likely to suffer and die during epidemics. While the causes of present-day chronic diseases—the systemic pandemic of our time—are multiple, none is more decisive than industrial food made through the subjugation of animals, land, and seas on the backs of exploited humans.

There is no end to the suffering, callousness, invisibility, and premature death that beings experience. Because the terrain is so extensive, and the history one of millennia, sheer overwhelm drives many to compartmentalize oppressed groups, champion specific causes, and seek to prioritize reparative claims on some envisaged scale of importance. Yet, we may go deeper and discern the common root cause: the instilled schema of hierarchy. Hierarchy entails looking down on the “other” as lacking, fungible, unworthy, or even despicable, and *therefore* usable, dispensable, killable, or deserving extermination.

Richard Falk fears that connecting the dots across divergent arenas of subjugation, and urging the universal liberation of all beings, may be a “utopian trap.” “If we try to do too much,” he warns, “we will tragically end by doing too little!” Yet it may well be that postponing that unitive work is itself the trap. For the “pragmatism” that Falk insists upon, of pursuing doable consecutive steps, *has not been working*—including the example he offers of prioritizing the abolition of nuclear weapons

over the abolition of war. We are running out of time. Guy Dauncey suggests an alternative pragmatism: since progressives often express solidarity toward both oppressed humans and nonhumans, “the ground is fertile to connect different movements, bringing more strength to them all.”

Steiner observes that the hierarchical structures of anthropocentrism or human exceptionalism (ratified in most of the Western philosophical canon) conferred a “unique, morally significant capacity” to the human. That avowed moral superiority—wherein, theoretically, only humans are due direct moral consideration—has sponsored the immorality of animal extinctions, abuses, and exterminations. When do we grasp the irony? It is hierarchy that must go for ethical life to emerge. Hierarchy is the scheme that colors the gaze, and guides or condones action, toward those dubbed “lesser” who can then be used as resources or swept aside if they stand in the way.

Capitalism, state power, language, ideology, and ruthless technology all work together in the present-day onslaught on all life. At the core of them all, and greasing the wheels of their elective affinity, is the makeover of the living world into *resource*.

It is high time to deracinate the idea of world, and anyone in it, as resource. At the root of the institution of property (highlighted by Jerry Mitchell, Alex Lautensach, and Dayton Martindale) lies that idea. At the root of factory farms lies that idea. At the root of burning rainforests for soybeans and palm oil, underlined by Dauncey, lies that idea. At the root of vivisection, zoos, puppy mills, fur farms, and Sea Worlds—that Martindale would not have us neglect—lies that idea. At the root of militarism sending young people to death and disability lies that idea. At the root of mind-numbing and dangerous labor, coerced upon disempowered people, lies that idea. Because all forms of oppression are practically and ideologically entangled, Nibert’s claim is compelling that “no single form can be effectively addressed if others are allowed to continue.” It is a tall order, yes, but commensurate with the depth of our predicament.

What lies on the other side of hierarchy and its construction of beings, places, and world as resource? Hierarchy does not intrude upon a blank canvas of either world or human mind. It intrudes upon a reality that precedes it and is far bigger: namely, the reality of unity-in-diversity.

Nandita Bajaj draws attention to the sensitivity present in children, who are more likely to express concern for the well-being of animals than adolescents are, revealing that the inborn human connection with the more-than-human world has to be broken through conditioning. “The worldview of supremacy,” she writes, “is a product of learned emotions, language, and behaviors that begin in childhood.” She justly calls such conditioning, effected in so many ways in schooling, “indoctrination” and “hardening.” Gwendolyn Hallsmith makes the same point. “We are born within an innate sense of relationship,” she states. “It has to be ‘educated’ out of us.”

Hierarchy hijacks the human mind, warps reality, and proceeds to deplete it of its vital force. Yet the reality of oneness remains ever-present, even among the ruins. Judith Lipton foregrounds the diversity-within-the-circumference-of-oneness by sharing a Buddhist practice: before the meal you are about to have, she asks, visualize and thank all the beings between you and the food before you. I was also deeply moved by Melanie Challenger’s discovery, in the diaries of whalers, that at least some of them expressed regret in killing the whales. I can only imagine how profoundly disturbed they must have been to be compelled to confess this in writing. The ethic of “felt kinship,” which Steiner advocates, arises within the reality that is always here. It is a matter of undoing the stranglehold of hierarchy, which obscures and distorts the reality of oneness, and then taking care to nurture the understanding of oneness in the children.

The reality of unity-in-diversity that Mathews calls a “unitive cosmos” elicits a sense of awe and attunement in its recognition. First People knew this, and wove stories and lifeways to align with it. Mathews makes contact with the normative side of unitive reality by calling it Law; she explicitly does not mean top-down imposition of injunctions. By Law, she draws attention to the arising of alignment, both compelled and voluntary, with the reality of oneness. The Indigenous Q’ero people call this arising of alignment *Ayni*, which roughly translates as “reciprocity” and “being in right relationship with.”

“Nature,” to quote Taylor’s rendition of an ideological cliché, “is viewed as an arena of perpetual struggle for survival in which the strong subdue the weak.” This view is a spin of hierarchical thought seeking to condone oppression, Taylor observes. Hierarchical systems veil the reality that is one, albeit exquisitely varied, and which calls forth the response of alignment (Law, *Ayni*). Yet hierarchy can never annihilate oneness. Indeed, we collectively experience the joy of alignment

with the reality of oneness in stories that we share. For example, in the film *Seven Years in Tibet*, the need to build an amphitheater for human artistic expression spontaneously generated the need to move the earthworms from the site of construction. That is a storied example of a mandate that arises from oneness. Such mandates of felt kinship do not come from ethics: instead, it is the other way around—inborn felt kinship has given rise to ethics. As Mathews explains, Axial morality falls short as a corrective exactly because moral exhortations within hierarchical societies try to come to the rescue in a world where *the very foundation of ethics*—alignment with the reality of unity-in-diversity—has been derailed via the violent intrusion of hierarchy.

Sometimes the reality of oneness is perceived instantly in the precipitation of a conversion experience, as for example when Aldo Leopold's world was turned upside down in the flash of eye contact he made with a dying she-wolf's green eyes. What instantly followed was not only remorse, but understanding. It is not a coincidence that Leopold recounts his conversion event in the same chapter that he sketches the vibrant ecological web of predator-prey-plantlife, and its undoing when top predators are exterminated. Mathews boldly states that "the Ought lies at the core of the Is." Otherwise stated, the experience of recognizing oneness brings the "ought" and the "is," simultaneously, online. The Leopold example raises the vexed question of hunting, which Koontz brought vividly into the discussion. Clearly, hunting can be done (in the modern world probably most often) without any acknowledgement of oneness. But can hunting be done in the context of maintaining oneness? Many Indigenous people say yes—with a lot of ceremony. Does ceremony absolve the violent act of killing? I leave that as an open question, but ceremony is praiseworthy as an act of remembering oneness.

The potential of alignment with unitive reality is immanent within human life. Our current riveted attention upon indigeneity carries this signification. The Indigenous model cannot be about adopting socio-historically decontextualized lifeways, as Taylor and Martindale rightly point out. But in its universal meaning, indigeneity is accepting that we are just one of many species. As Suprabha Seshan depicts the ideas and lifeways of the once forest dwelling Adivasi people, "*they are the forest.*" Likewise, humanity may one day understand that *it is the Earth*.

The knowing of unity-in-diversity is concealed in the open, and, when overtly expressed, it is often

dismissed as romanticism. But its indestructible presence is the reason, for example, that violence against beings has to be kept hidden, or cloaked in euphemisms like “culling,” “harvest,” “bycatch,” and “Wildlife Services,” or tenaciously denied. An unforgettable experience I had as professor at Virginia Tech, while teaching a module on CAFOs, was a student declaring in class that all notions of abused animals in factory farms are PETA propaganda. In reality, he asserted, the industry had long ago corrected any ethical lapses. To be sure, we diagnose such a claim as denial. Within it, however, lies an oddly hopeful nugget: *violence has no inherent justification*. Inherent justification belongs only to oneness and to its tropes of care, reciprocity, consideration, attentiveness, wonder, and the like—or, in a word, to love, broadly understood.

Thus, while Challenger makes a valid point that “our extraordinary mental and endocrinal toolkit can nudge us towards acts of caring and bonding, or towards acts of selfishness, exploitation or violence,” we bypass a pivot for transformation by not acknowledging the built-in asymmetry between these modalities. Judith Lipton cites Bertolt Brecht’s words that “we crave to be more kindly than we are.” Yet the existential asymmetry between kindness and its opposites belies Brecht’s statement: closer to the truth is that we crave to be as kindly as we truly are. Because love is its own inherent justification, and violence is only justified by the illusion of hierarchy, the real possibility exists that humanity will create a world in which all life is nurtured to its fullest potential.

Legislation to safeguard animals from domination is indispensable and integral to the Great Transition. This is set forth by Mitchell, Falk, Martindale, Koontz, Mike Jones, and William Lynn, citing various examples of successes in recent years, “cracks of light in the darkness of animal injustice,” in Koontz’s words. Along with that work, we can persevere in continually revealing reality’s foundation of oneness that will accelerate the spread and adoption of needed policies. What lies ever-present in the communicative sensibilities of human lifeworlds? What timeless heritage is preserved in the Indigenous knowledge of kinship as primal ground? What are we called to manifest—which is always here but smothered by hierarchy—in the turning of history that is coming?

Universality

Universality is bound with the question of how humanity may live in a world that is one and an indescribable multiplicity. The most general answer is to accede beings their birthright to be who they are and become as they will in the places where their natures want to dwell. In political terms, as Hallsmith puts it, universality demands that “the voices of all beings should have a legitimate place where decisions are made.” Applied to wild animals, it means letting them “run free,” in Seshan’s words, to pursue their lives, forging, by means of requisite abundances and relations, their evolutionary destinies. Wild animals—especially the big ones who like Mother Trees are an umbrella of protection for all—need spacious, unfragmented habitats. They require large-scale nature protection, rewilding projects at all scales, and connectivity between protected places.

The advocacy for large-scale protection of land and seas frequently meets the criticism of mirroring the human separation from nature that got us into the big mess in the first place. But the bane of human-nature dualism lies in *hierarchy*, which becomes operational, with respect to wild nature, through the nonstop incursions and appropriation of the natural world. Nature protection—whether strict or within Indigenous guardianship—does not reflect dualism but sensitive consideration for nonhumans’ places. Far from being a novel spin on human-nature separation/dualism, the directive of nature protection flows from our overdue affirmation of deep esteem for nature.

Lynn submits that we promote the well-being of animals “through ethical renewal and rewilding.” “Rewilding,” he argues, is “a direct duty humans owe as a matter of restorative justice in a more-than-human world.” Wild animals, *both* as individuals and lifeforms, may thus rehabilitate their birthright to autonomous existence stolen from them by hierarchy. In the words of Seshan, restoring wild homelands lets animals “be sovereign in their own right.” “They are sinewy and strong,” she writes. “Their lives interweave to make mindboggling diversity. Along with plants and fungi, the microbes, winds, and waters, they create the forest.”

Focusing the lens of universal reasoning upon so-called “livestock,” deferring to their birthright (a birthright co-created with humans) means abolishing CAFOs and reinstating farm animals

on farms. “Dismantling the animal-industrial complex,” writes Taylor, “is not diversionary but essential.” Superseding industrial and large-scale animal agriculture will take us a long way toward preempting extinctions and addressing climate breakdown by letting land and seas revert to carbon-sequestering rewilded expanses.

Farm animals dwell by origin in farms where humans in alignment with them care for them with kindness supporting them to live long lives. Yet for farm animals to live on farms, without undue intrusion on wild nature, there must be far fewer of them. Today, “livestock” comprises 62 percent of terrestrial mammal biomass, while wild mammals have been beaten back to 4 percent. We can move in the direction of flipping those percentages.

I find myself resisting the idea that farm/domestic animals, having been brought into existence by means of domination, should be left to die out or blend back into free nature when the time of their liberation arrives. We underestimate animal agency when we deny farm animals their involvement in coming-into-being. Citing Mary Midgley, Baird Callicott points out that the process of domestication cannot simply be reduced to the capture and enslavement of nonhuman animals. The mixed-species communities that formed, especially after the Neolithic, involved agency on the part of “both parties.” Otherwise put, farm animals’ subjugated identity does not exhaustively define them; they are also, especially by now, forms of life. In agreement with what Callicott seems to hint toward, as lifeforms in their own right, farm animals deserve protection and preservation within the contract of care that industrial animal agriculture has so unforgivably violated.

The pressing question remains: what does it require of us to loose wild animals into their spacious abodes and to restore farm animals where they belong? One thing is certain: humanity cannot expect to continue on the path of growth and also be able to liberate animals into the places they want to live. On the contrary, the human enterprise needs to shrink. Shrinking is not about loss; humanity, as Bajaj states elsewhere, can “shrink toward abundance.” For one (extremely important) thing, downscaling human presence and activities would let us build a world where high-quality food can be grown for all. By shrinking, we can upgrade the quality of human life at every level, including creating conditions where people can be nourished with wholesome food, while abolishing the industrial-agriculture and industrial-fishing warfare modes of food production. But if we stay on the path of growth, continually struggling to “feed the world” with cheap and unethical

food, we move ineluctably toward the destruction of both planetary and human health. As Seshan sums the matter, “well-being is of the whole, and suffering is of the whole.”

Do we have a choice between whether we continue to grow or opt to shrink? This remains an open question. Beyond its existential overtones, people have a chance to recognize that they have some choice in what they eat. (Of course, degrees of choice vary.) If, in accordance with the above reasoning, farm animals need to be fewer, so that both they and wild animals can live well, then it follows that the aligned human choice is a mostly plant-based diet. Humans would thus defer to the interests of all other animals. Yet that is not where the story ends. Because, as a general rule, when one becomes mostly vegan, while also eating uncontaminated and real (nonindustrial) food, one embarks on a life journey of feeling exceptionally well, physically and mentally. Relatedly, one also finds that the odds of evading the diseases of civilization—heart disease, stroke, cancer, obesity, diabetes, bowel disorders, and Alzheimer’s, to mention the most prominent—become remarkably high.

Briefly put, what is good for all other animals turns out to be good for the majority of human animals too. Why are we missing this extraordinary alignment staring us in the face? How many more decades of data do we need under our belts to become convinced that a mostly vegan diet of clean whole foods is a choice that vastly facilitates vibrant life?

Here I want to address the statement, offered by Dauncey, that humans are “the apex predator.” We are not even remotely close to being the apex predator; indeed, one thing humans are clearly not is carnivores. Taylor tags the claim of humans as “top predator” as one that helps to rationalize (regardless of author intention) domination over animals. The real top predators among us—fanged, clawed, sharp-toothed, and overwhelming in force—can take a human out in the blink of an eye. The big predators, who play starring roles in their terrestrial and marine habitats, need space. We can choose to concede them the space their natures need, and stay out of their way. If we visit their homes in search of adventure, we should understand the risks.

The invention of fire by an ancestor of *Homo sapiens* enabled humans to become omnivorous. Omnivory is rooted in the deep and recent biocultural history of the human. Even so, humans thrive mostly on plants with perhaps some animal foods on the side. Like Martindale and others in this

conversation, I am vegan (since ten years ago and vegetarian before that), but I do not think that asking all people to become vegan is reasonable. But asking humanity (with a few exceptions) to become 80 to 90 percent vegan, while sourcing the remainder from “small-scale, organic, and humane animal agriculture” in Callicott’s words, is squarely within the bounds of reason. For this entreaty not only asks humans to align with the wellness of all other animals, but with the highest potential within their own bodies.

Mitchell writes that factory farms feed billions. Factory farms source animal feed from industrial agriculture, which overtakes grasslands, savannahs, and rainforests. Industrial crops come packaged with agrochemical and synthetic fertilizer inputs. The fertilizers, as Vaclav Smil starkly put it, have been the detonator of the human population explosion. Lautensach comments that the growth of human numbers contributes to the problem of the ill treatment of animals. I agree that population growth factors into many problems, but most importantly it factors *intrinsically* into our socio-ecological crisis by handing over food to the industrial system. Roughly half of us would not be here were it not for industrial food production.

Industrial inputs destroy soil fertility (and simultaneously mask the destruction) by degrading soil biodiversity—including obliterating many little animals who are part of the workforce of the soil. The industrial system today grows food by contaminating the planet, destroying biodiversity, keeping subjugated animals alive long enough through antibiotics, and damaging human health most especially among the disempowered. This arrangement will not last. We can either see the entangled domination that defines the industrial food system and supersede it, or we can let it chug along to its endpoint of the physical degradation of everything and the moral degradation of the human.

Humanity does not need industrial inputs to grow food on a planet that knows fertility beyond imagination. Along with spreading the message of the all-around amazing tidings of mostly plant-based eating, we can pursue balancing our numbers—by means of human rights—with Earth’s innate fertility and the conservation of wild places.

Animal

Reading the contributions offered a captivating ride through different terminology and

admonitions about terminology. The word “animal,” as in exclusively nonhuman animal, carries a range of uses and connotations some of which decisively resist derogatory or hierarchical meanings. One way that human love for animals pushes back against their subjugation is by elevating the word “animal” into the grandeur that it references. “To encounter an animal is an elixir of life,” writes Sylvain Tesson in a recent travelogue in search of the now rare Snow Leopard in Tibet. Jones echoes this experience when he shares his childhood memory of “delight and wonder,”

“peering through the cover of bracken to watch a vixen play with her cubs” on summer eves. Walt Whitman famously proclaimed: “I could turn around and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain’d.”

Inside such statements in reverence of animal life lives the desire to convey the magic of animals, and the wisdom that they teach us provided we are paying attention. While their praise points toward what lies beyond the word “animal,” they also redeem the beauty that lives within that word.

Endnotes

1. Sylvain Tesson, *The Art of Patience: Seeking the Snow Leopard in Tibet* (New York: Penguin Press, 2021).